

# **Challenges of History Writing in South Asia**

Special Volume in Honour of  
Dr Mubarak Ali

Edited by  
**Syed Jaffar Ahmed**

Pakistan Study Centre  
University of Karachi  
&  
Pakistan Labour Trust, Karachi

# Challenges of History Writing in South Asia

## Special Volume in Honour of Dr Mubarak Ali

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Syed Jaffar Ahmed

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## Preface

During the course of conceiving this book and then carrying it through different stages of production, I have incurred indebtedness to a number of friends and colleagues. First of all, I wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the contributors who readily agreed to join in this labour of love. Given their interest in, and association with, the theme of the book as well as their acknowledgement and appreciation of Dr. Mubarak Ali's work, all the contributors sent their articles within the time frame suggested to them. Yet, if the volume took some time to see the light of day it was due to the disturbances which engulfed Karachi in the last few years. Moreover, the process of editing also took time more than what was conceived in the beginning. However, one may have a sigh of relief now that the volume has finally come out.

The scheme with which the articles have been arranged has been spelled out in the Introduction. Here, I wish to express the desire that similar volumes covering South Asian themes should be entertained as regional frameworks are fast becoming adequate sociopolitical, economic, and consequently, academic frameworks within the globalized world. Through this volume, a number of historians have assembled together. It is hoped that further assemblages will also happen not only with respect to the discipline of history but also in the context of other social sciences.

Except for the paper of Kamran Asdar Ali, all the papers in this volume are new and have been written especially for this festschrift. Ali has given a detailed footnote in his article explaining its origin and a simultaneous publication elsewhere. Sharif al Mujahid's paper 'History—the State of the Discipline: an Overview' is a thoroughly revised and enlarged version of his keynote address presented in the 20<sup>th</sup> Pakistan History Conference organized by Pakistan Historical Society and Pakistan Study Centre in Karachi on 13-15 April 2005. As editor of the present volume I thank the

organizations to whom the original copyright of the above two papers belong.

During various phases of the preparation of this volume I had to trouble Dr. Mubarak Ali for the clarification of certain things especially the ones which pertained to his writings and their background. He was kind enough to read my essay about his work sent to him to indicate if there was any factual mistake in it. Since the idea of this festschrift was conveyed to him right in the beginning, naturally he must have waited for its realization. I wish to express my sincere apologies for taking so long in making it a reality but I also hope that he would be mindful of the difficulties in pursuing serious objectives like research and publication in an environment imbued with uncertainties caused by everyday disturbances, a reference to which has already been made.

Here, I wish to thank my colleagues and research staff in the Pakistan Study Centre for all the help and cooperation rendered by them. In particular, I am obliged to Dr. Anwar Shaheen for her active participation in this project especially in taking care of the technical production of the book. The research assistants of the Centre prepared the Index for which I thank them, too. However, I alone am responsible for any shortcoming or mishap in the book. It is hoped that the volume will be welcomed by the historians and students of history spread all over South Asia.

Pakistan Study Centre  
University of Karachi

Syed Jaffar Ahmed

30 March 2013

# Introduction

*Syed Jaffar Ahmed*

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In producing a festschrift for Dr Mubarak Ali, the purpose before the contributors as well as the Pakistan Study Centre, is to acknowledge his contribution to the discipline of history as well as the concerted efforts he has made in making history accessible and meaningful for common people. In a society that suffers severely from acknowledgement deficit it was taken as a duty to put on record the value we attribute to the work of Mubarak Ali.

Mubarak Ali stands out prominently among the community of historians of Pakistan for two major reasons. Pakistan may not have produced too many historians who would have made their mark internationally but it was never short of those who could claim to be historians in their own right. The whole lot of historians in the country can be grouped variously in categories such as professional or non-professional, objective or subjective, conformist or non-conformist, actual historians or just the teachers of history, etc. But Pakistan did not have a people's historian who would have shifted for the Pakistani readers the focus of history from the descriptions of, or about, the officialdom of the past, to the general people and their diverse sections.

Peoples' historiography is not a new avenue in the discipline of history as far as various other countries of the world are concerned. Social history had begun to attract historians way back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the field flourished and reached its height in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when on the one hand works on different social groups like industrial workers, peasants, professionals, miners, soldiers, etc. started coming up while on the other, certain historians began to produce their magnus opus on social history. Theoretical insights were also built in many of these works with the result that history came to interact with other social sciences thereby enriching itself. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century excellent works of people's history reached the studies and libraries,



giving to their readers a very different, more enlightening and closer to reality flavour of history. **We, in Pakistan, lagged way behind.**

Of course, there has been a tradition of folk histories in the Indian subcontinent like elsewhere and Pakistan's different cultural traditions do carry works based on folk narratives carrying rational and pro-people sentiments and messages as compared to the ones produced at the level of the royal courts and their immediate appendages. However, the traditional, and more usually, the medieval folk histories were more couched in literatures and were seldom produced as distinct genre. **In our own times, there was great need to bring the people in the limelight of history in the manner in which modern historians were doing.** It was to this that the attention was drawn for the first time by Mubarak Ali. Now he has been writing for about 35 to 40 years. What he has been able to do in this period is his continued assertion **about the role of people in history.** He has written extensively on the limitations of official historiography and the nationalist history, and has highlighted what merits a history built around the society carries.

Mubarak Ali has himself written on various aspects of people's lives and he has written on the different dimensions on which our young and future historians can do their research. Moreover, what he has done is that he has produced all his works in very simple language that can easily be followed by a common reader. Relieving history from jargons and to make it understandable for common people was not useless as with the passage of time the number of his readers has increased, so much so that today his readership has extended to even the far-off regions of Pakistan. **He has emerged as a people's historian.**

While introducing this volume we thought that we should invite historians from different countries of South Asia, because these countries share a number of commonalities. In the past they were either under the same administration or had cultural relations with each other which could be taken as a context of the subsequent developments in the production of history in these regions. We were not able to receive papers from all the countries of South Asia but we did get good response from Pakistan and India, as well as from some other South Asian historians who are based in countries other than their own.

## Introduction

The papers in this volume discuss different aspects of South Asian history; some of them opt to discuss the traits of historiography. A general and common theme is to highlight the problems and issues which have dominated the writing of history in South Asia. These articles have been assembled in a manner which needs to be explained away. Instead of arranging them according to the alphabetical order of the authors' name which perhaps would have been fair, but would have also made the volume a bit confusing, taxing the patience of the readers, who would have to move from modern themes to medieval, or from a particular theme to a more general and more encompassing one. We could have also arranged all the articles thematically but there was this likelihood that some of the most senior authors would have gone in the end of the volume. Though, in principle, we do not assume to entertain a hierarchy in our contributors it appeared a bit rude to have more seniors put in the end while the juniors, including the editor, in the beginning. South Asia, anyway, is also known for its modesty. We tried to resolve this matter to some extent, though not wholly, by arranging the articles in sections. The first section carries the articles by Pakistani contributors, the second, the Indians, and the third, those from beyond South Asia. In this arrangement as well, this needs to be explained that we are not assuming that a section stands for one point of view, rather, each paper stands for itself and no two papers in any section claim to follow a similar position. If a similar position is identified in two or more articles it would only be a coincidence.

The volume begins with a somewhat detailed account of Mubarak Ali's work written by Syed Jaffar Ahmed. It refers to his major writings and tries to cover the various dimensions of history that he has been able to write on or bring to the fore for others to write on them. The paper also discusses how over the years Mubarak Ali has been able to transform his work of writing into a type of practical movement. Organizing conferences all over the country, holding seminars, making television presentations, writing in newspapers, etc., are different dimensions of his practical work.

Following the detailed account of Mubarak Ali's work, there begins the first section carrying the contributions received from Pakistan. Here, the first article is from the pen of Sharif al Mujahid, titled 'History – the State of the Discipline: an Overview'.

As a senior scholar who has to his credit numerous original works as well as an impressive set of compiled volumes, Mujahid has traveled a long distance in his own evolution as a historian. Beginning as a more traditional writer, Mujahid has, over the years, revisited a number of his earlier positions, with the result that his writings have become more and more refreshing. Here, he delineates about the state of the discipline as it has been found in the first six decades of the country's history. He narrates the problems confronted by those who take to history writing in the particular social and political environment of Pakistan. Referring to the works of I.H. Qureshi, Shaikh Abdur Rashid, K.K. Aziz, and Mubarak Ali, he has summed up the various causes which have impeded history writing or affected negatively its quality. He surveys the legacy of the past and how it has continued to influence the post-independence history writing in Pakistan. Mujahid has also found it useful to compare the historiography of Pakistan and India, of course not due to any ideological compulsion but simply to demonstrate how different environments delineate and determine the scope of history.

Rubina Saigol discusses how patriarchy was reconstructed in the modern times with new social objectives. She holds that the depriving of girls from the right to education in different parts of Pakistan, especially in the Taliban controlled areas, where they have been burning the schools as a part of their agenda to implement their particular version of Islam. Taking women as a symbol of community identity has been an old issue. How has it worked in the present times can be understood in its historical context. Therefore, the author peeps into the past and observes a division of the public and private spheres as it impacted the various communities – Hindus and Muslims, for instance – in India. She holds, 'With lose of control over public sphere, the private one was jealously guarded for it was here that the seeds of continuity resided. The pressure by the colonial state to educate women could no longer be resisted as liberal ideas of democracy, equality and liberty spread across the colonialised landscape'. Their reformers were aware of the force of constrictive customs related to widow marriage, Sati, purdah, and polygamy. She adds that the policies of promoting women's education were solely designed to promote patriarchy and the traditional class system. In other words, the

## Introduction

methodology was modern but the goal was conservative. During the Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's days, there was a section that believed that women have to be kept away from the morally corrupting public sphere where the values and practices of the colonizers prevailed. The religious *ulema* did try to reorder, reorganize and restructure the private sphere, to guard it in a reaction to the loss of control over the public sphere.

Nadeem Omar Tarar traces the socio-political conditions of the colonial Punjab in the context of the pre-colonial social formation of the region. This takes him to the theorizations made so far about the notion of Oriental Despotism. He refers to the evolution of the very idea of despotism from the times of the Greeks to the modern times. This theoretical understanding informs his study of the colonial Punjab wherein the modern science and technology were employed to establish the British system of control. This control emanated essentially from the British military power that was extended to administration and was employed to ensure the colonization of Punjab's agriculture at large.

Syed Jaffar Ahmed writes about the Pakistani historians' and other intellectuals' treatment of the events of 1971 which culminated in the breakup of the country. He holds that though a lot has been written about the separation of East Pakistan in the last four decades, yet most of the literature has been led by emotionalism. A lot of it tries to put blame on one or the other political figure who was at the helm of affairs at that time, or tries to build conspiracy theories instead of involving itself in serious historical and political analysis. It is not that the serious analysis is totally absent; no, it is there but confined to too few works. Moreover, very few even among the serious writers have tried to explain the breakup of the country along a theoretical framework. Perhaps, a fairly good segment of the work done abroad does explain many of the aspects not touched by Pakistani writers or not addressed by them as meaningfully as they should have. This means that room for further enquiry along theoretical lines is still wide open.

Muhammad Shafique deals with another important theme addressing the trends in Baloch historiography. He holds that during the colonial times the Baloch historians came to interact with the modern concepts of nationhood which were readily tried to be made use of for the construction of a Baloch nationalist

discourse in modern sense. Though, there has been a contradiction between a modern Baloch nationalist assertion and an overwhelmingly tribal Baloch society, the new discourse served as a vehicle for the formation of the Baloch political assertion and the Baloch's urge to get their due place in the federation of Pakistan. Needless to say, that the overall failure of the successive central governments of Pakistan, in addressing the Baloch issue has made the Baloch nationalist platform stronger, and at times, violent too.

Architect Pervaiz Vandal, traces the emergence of division between arts and science in the world of scholarship. He looks into the impact of colonialism on culture which continued even after the formal end of colonialism. Therefore, the influence of colonial patterns of thinking can very easily be seen in all walks of life in Pakistan. Education is just one example of it. Under the influence of the colonial tradition, the Pakistani intelligentsia, by and large, failed to realize the importance of the old folk wisdom as depicted in the folk literature. This has deprived the Pakistanis, especially their new generations, to benefit from their rich cultural heritage. Vandal, along with, Sajida Vandal, is also the moving spirit behind the THAAP conferences, held regularly in Lahore with the objective to decolonize the patterns of thinking in different walks of life in Pakistan, especially in the area of education. In his paper, Vandal focuses the process of fragmentation of knowledge in Europe with apparent emphasis on science and technology and neglect, if not degradation, of the arts education.

Sharif al Mujahid, in another piece, writes about the press history of Pakistan, suggesting that it needs a reconstruction given the ongoing debate about where to locate the origin of the things we call 'Pakistani'. The debate is not new in history as Pakistani historians have remained in contestation on whether to start Pakistani history from the ancient times or to begin it from 712 when Muhammad Bin Qasim captured Sindh. In the context of the press, the question has been whether to begin the Pakistani press history from 1840s when the first newspapers were brought out in the territories which constitute today's Pakistan, or to begin it from 1780 when the initial newspapers were launched in the subcontinent. Mujahid denounces the territorialization of history and takes an enlightened position to trace the roots of whatever is there in Pakistan in wherever those roots are found.



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In the section based on contributions from Indian historians, the first article 'India through the Indological Prisms: Filling in Some Voids' comes from the pen of Harbans Mukhia. As a senior and widely acclaimed historian from India, Harbans Mukhia writes about the limitations of the historiography that had dominated before the opening of new avenues in the last few decades. The history written before had been, by and large, elitist, embedded in Brahmanical culture and mostly written on the basis of the Sanskrit sources. Now, the world of historiography is changing with fresh perceptions, new tools of enquiry, and the widening of the subjects of enquiry.

Gyanendra Pandey engages with some of the orthodoxies that have continued to dominate the world of scholarship and historiography. He does so in the context of how history has been written and is being written in India. He revisits the idea of nation, nationality, community, communalism etc. He also highlights the importance and need of expanding the horizons of historiography beyond the traditional 'national state' and 'political frameworks'. This means that one is in search of alternative narratives which, apart from enriching our corpus of history, would also facilitate our thinking to understand our present in a more realistic manner. For this we need conviction and courage a good reservoir of which has been demonstrated by Mubarak Ali.

Ruby Lal highlights the importance of alternative narratives of Mughal history. In her article, 'Rethinking Mughal India: The Challenge of a Princess' Memoir', the author holds that the historiography dealing with this period has largely focused the military and political power as the predominant feature of the Mughal era. Even the postcolonial Indian historiography continued this trait. The confinement of a long era in the straitjacket of politics and military expeditions has rendered this history incomplete and inadequate. There was need to expand the horizon of this historiography to enable it to bring into its fold the worlds of culture and society. This has been done in the last few decades resulting in the appearance of different schools of historiography addressing the Mughal society and its various dimensions.

In this setting and the background of theoretical discussion, the author traces an important historical source, that is, the memoir of Gulbadan Banu Begum, daughter of Babur, sister of

Humayun, and aunt of Akbar. The memoir *Ahval-i-Humayun Badshah* is a departure from its contemporary historical sources which were mostly the court histories. Ruby Lal observes that the writers other than Gulbadan Banu, wrote their accounts under different genres—*tarikh*, *tazkireh*, *namah*, *qanun*, *vaqi'at*, etc., while Gulbadan wrote *Ahval*, 'meaning conditions, state, circumstances, or situations'. The author further argues that the account of Gulbadan depicts 'the everyday life of the royal family in the peripatetic circumstances is a unique piece of writing. Gulbadan creates an unusual space in her writing, and helps to compose a different picture of many areas of Mughal life about which we know very little from other sources'. The author indicates that if historians wish to expand the horizons of Mughal history they may search for useful contemporary sources like Gulbadan's memoirs, which may not be too many, but there must be some which may still be lying to be discovered.

In his article 'The Study of Sufism in Medieval India: An Overview', Raziuddin Aquil focuses the various trends of Sufism in India. He begins with the origin of Sufi tradition in the 9<sup>th</sup> century Iraq. He goes on to show as to how it came to enjoy a wide following and, at times, political clout in different Islamic societies. Bringing his searchlight on to India, he highlights the religious, historical, intellectual, and political aspects of Sufism during the medieval times. He also refers to the contribution of the Sufis to literature and music. The interbreeding of the Indian Sufi traditions and those coming from abroad also became an important reformist strand and impacted the Indian society in a very strong manner. Despite the orthodox ulemas' resistance to Sufis and the Sufi Islam which was regarded by them as inadequate and inferior, the Sufi tradition flourished throughout the medieval times. However, it would be wrong to assume that Sufi Islam represented one homogenous position or perception. There had been variance within the Sufi tradition. One set of Sufis preferred a life of isolation divorced from worldly matters like politics or even the immediate social institutions. The other set of the Sufis adopted a different course and many of them, especially in the Chishti order participated in the court activities, visited the sultans and even tried to influence politics. There had also been

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instances of antagonism between the Sufis and the empire. The author has gone in depth to explain the reasons of it.

A War-time city of Kolkata during 1914 and 1918, is chosen by Suchetana Chattopadhyay who argues that Kolkata had a glorious past and enjoyed primacy and eminence in the pre-War years but the War brought a doom for the city, which can be described as years of 'fear, scarcity and repression'. Fear, she elaborates with reference to the actions of troops, criminals, and state. There were some added factors like disease, transport accidents, urban deterioration, inflation, and use of arms. The failure of jute industry and poor paddy crop in 1914 cast famine conditions in Bengal; the scarcity for which the government could not do anything, caused hunger. The government had also exported food products to the extent that the people were left starving. The common persons' sufferings made them alienated from the War the government was fighting in distant corners of the globe. The colonial capital was prospering at the cost of migrant workers of factories and docks, while the rulers remained unscathed. The official rhetoric recorded 'happy' conditions and the lack of education, and poverty was declared to be the cause of famine and epidemic deaths resulting from small-pox and influenza in 1915 and 1918. The aspect of repression has been described with reference to the state violence and counter violence. The rich class was ever ready to express its loyalty to the Empire, whereas only a few revolutionary nationalists were there to articulate the resentment to the policies of repression. The ordinary crimes of middle class boys were taken by the authorities as political offences. The problems of the youth got expression in the college magazines. The 'great' War had demanded loyalty in many ways, even in the form of accepting deduction in the salary. The War was the highly discussed topic in the academic institutions through plays, writings, and the library activities. Writings of William James and H.G. Wells, both had shown a degree of 'liberal ambiguity'. Rabindranath Tagore was a voice of Bengal resisting oppression on the students. Courts acted as tools of political oppression leashed on those branded as extremists, seditionists and terrorists. Certain areas were identified as the centres of 'seditious activities'. Press censorship was applied to quell resistance to colonial oppression. Chattopadhyay concludes

that a large majority of people had undergone suffering during the war years, the poor were the worst sufferers. The middle class was impoverished and the masses rose up against the colonial regime in the post-War years. Chattopadhyay has extensively used official reports, local and foreign newspapers archives, magazines and the census files, alongwith other analytical material on the subject.

Sudhir Chandra's provoking article 'Two "Failed" Heroes: Understanding Modern South Asia' deals with an interesting theme. He argues that though Gandhi and Jinnah are taken as their heroes and revered leaders by India and Pakistan, history shows that their ideals did not realize in these countries. Gandhi was frustrated even in his own life time when soon after partition he felt himself sidelined and disenchanted. He was disappointed by the communal frenzy shown at the time of partition, when even the weaker got a chance to be violent. This revealed to Gandhi that 'there never had been such a satyagraha', that is, non-violence, the motto of his politics. He found that there was a kind of passive resistance by the weak, as a preparation of an armed resistance. Congress rejected the concept of non-violence but kept using its instrumentality; the myth continued in the nationalist historiography of India. The historians had also made mistake in believing that non-violence had worked in history. Gandhi pledged that he would fast unto death to prevent partition but he did not do so and partition took place. The author has tried to expose some contradictions and short-sighted approaches of Gandhi, which rendered him a failure in the total picture of India, a reality which made partition a tragedy and birth of Pakistan an outcome of Muslim communalism; still a tragedy according to many Indians. Gandhi also realized that opposing Pakistan after its establishment was useless, so he welcomed it. On the other hand, the author argues that Jinnah just on the eve of partition spoke about the Pakistani 'citizenry in which Muslims cease to be Muslim and Hindus cease to be Hindu'. This was the secular pronouncement. He holds that it should not 'be difficult to see that there was no logical inconsistency between his espousal of the two nation theory and his conception of secular democratic Pakistan'. Ironically, Jinnah was not rightly understood in his country. Gandhi is regarded as *Rasthrapita* and Jinnah is revered as *Baba-e-Qaum*, both titles meaning 'the father of nation', but both nations have failed them. Though, the two leaders, according to the author, were

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defeated in the moment of their 'most glorious risk', Jinnah has emerged, for the secular and democratic forces in Pakistan, as a symbol of their struggle. Gandhi would perhaps 'need a longer wait, in India, and also in the world, notwithstanding the mushrooming of Gandhian movements all over', he concludes.

Sarah Ansari delves into the issue of community formation as it operated in the Indian subcontinent particularly before and after partition. She rightly observes that the idea of community has been very attractive theme in Social Sciences as by the mid-1950s more than ninety definitions of the term had already come into circulation. She, however, groups most of these in three categories – communities of territory (or shared residence), interest (or shared ethnicity, religion, etc.), and attachment (shared sense of identity). She holds that 'all three kinds of community have the potential to act as political frameworks for their members, defining and creating the boundaries for political activities'. Taking this as the theoretic outline, she holds that so far as the notion of 'community' in the subcontinent was concerned, it is possible to argue that they were not really territorial or place communities, and while by definition they tended to be interest communities, only sometimes did they show the signs of being communities of attachment. Not only this but the community identity has also remained in 'a state of flux, changing and adapting to developing circumstances, rather than being fixed'. This may be taken as a useful approach to analyze some of the contemporary issues of Pakistan and South Asia as a whole. Sarah Ansari has grounded her own work on Sindh, in this very framework.

Kamran Asdar Ali has tried to address some of the literary debates of the immediate post-partition phase. The culture of the newly formed country, Pakistan, was then undefined. Partition involved a good amount of insanity, focused in the short stories of famous Urdu writer Sa'adat Hasan Manto, who wrote extensively about the post-catastrophic turmoil. Manto has written about the nostalgia of the old localities, anxiety inherent in uncertainty about cultural and social atmosphere, or the governance by the locals, and the nationalist movement and feelings overarching all these. Arguing that during wars and killings, like the ones happened on partition, normative structures lose their strength and control, the sense of which may lead the intellectuals to define things anew.

There were, in the first decade after partition, clear ideological divisions among Pakistani intellectuals who were identified as communists and Islamists. Ali has focused on the debates on the question of morality so vehemently discussed with reference to the short stories of Manto. The ensuing debate surrounding the issue of 'national culture' still goes on, and this makes the article relevant even today. Ali, while highlighting several aspects of Manto's writings, discusses them in the historical context of the Muslim question in British India, and characterizes his characters as 'queer subjects' or 'morally displaced' ones. The ordinary habits of people demonstrated in extraordinary times have also been highlighted by him. He criticizes the critics of Manto, like Askari, and asserts that an uncertain future 'brings us a reading of history and of literature that is more idiosyncratic, nuanced, and open-ended, a reparative reading instead of a programmatic or ideological one that merely juxtaposes progressives against the reactionaries'. He highlights that the progressive writers created, a sense of negation of the completeness of the independence project, hence telling people to continue the struggle till the emancipation of the masses through a proletariat revolution. The non-progressives, on the other hand, raised question about the patriotism of the progressive writers, who claimed their loyalty with the masses rather than the elite of Pakistan. The dialectic continued and the state relied on those who favoured the elite; the progressives had to face prison, exile, ban on publications, and above all, Islam was used as a tool against the progressives calling them anti-Islam. They, however, wanted an egalitarian Pakistan; their opponents wanted a Muslim state through state violence legitimised by digging the historical evidence. Ali suggests that Manto be read to see 'an idiosyncratic and unpredictable sense of future that contains within itself political elements that depend on everyday forms of cultural expression, and such forms may not always rely upon fixed categories of institutionalized politics'. Manto has indeed presented particular life histories and related counter-logics emerging from the perversities of that existence and has criticised the generalized notions of subjectivities. With this argument, Ali concludes that the new forced identity and tools of identity formation, could not work hence the 'real history' must override such drawbacks.

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Ishtiaq Ahmed has focused on a contemporary issue of vital historical significance – the exploding of nuclear devices by both India and Pakistan in May 1998 and the reaction of civil society to it, especially that of the intellectuals of Indian and Pakistani diaspora, through electronic mails. Their role in generating a peace movement has been discussed in its two aspects: how and why they could mediate and the nature of implications of the global networks for the politics of the region and the peace efforts by the civil society. The security threat ensued by the blasts in the backdrop of past wars and enmity between India and Pakistan alarmed the peace lobby. Ishtiaq Ahmed explains security as an identity issue, escalated due to the experiences of partition, bad neighbour relations, symbolic closure of Wagha-Attari border, despite cultural attractions at the popular level. The Kashmir and other bones of contention, inclinations of various regimes in India and Pakistan, their mandate for peace dialogue, and the most deleterious event of Babri mosque demolition by extremist Hindus, all paint a picture to predicate the issue of nuclear explosions. Concepts like the cyber world, flows, imaginary world, and sets of landscapes in their fluid and irregular shapes help the analysts to see the emergent dimensions of interactions among the communities living in space and time unsurpassable with the old technologies but navigable in the modern age of information and connectivity. Ahmed finds the concepts of ethnoscares and ideoscares relevant for his analysis of the diasporic efforts aimed against nuclearization of South Asia. He calls most of them as economic migrants, including himself, too, and explains the sociology of migrants who have ‘oversensitive relationships with the state of origin’, expressed through remission of money as well as playing as lobbyist for their countries in the new societies. Many of these migrants have joined active politics, established solidarity groups, community centres, and worship organizations. Their more significant role has been regarding print and electronic media, websites, projecting and defending interests of their mother states and religious communities. There are hybrid networks of Indian and Pakistanis; those in the mainstream come in close interaction with each other. They act jointly in the face of problems at the new place such as racism, cultural alienation, etc. They also share a high culture of poetic and artistic heritage of

mainstream South Asian languages and promote it through concerts, websites, radio programs, apart from physically being in close interaction. Their reactions to South Asian problems immediately affect these communities.

In reaction to the nuclear blasts of May 1998, a nationalist came out to support his government and to celebrate the newly found grandeur, but the counter-narratives also emerged at home and abroad through intellectuals, who were integrated into the world human rights and peace movements through electronic technologies. Being out of the reach of their states such activists could defy their governments, and link up with activists on opposite side of border and the international circles, too. A Track-3 diplomacy had already been tried since the 1980s between India and Pakistan through various organizations in the region. The nuclear blasts triggered a wave of interaction and discussions. Ishtiaq Ahmed explains the Indian and Pakistani reaction to blasts, which came out through written articles, press conferences, especially formed organizations, and conventions, etc., in India and Pakistan. Abroad, an activity was going on through especially designed Internet websites, regular contacts through emails with over 2100 persons, providing information to international media and UN bodies, and the global community. All this has been explained by Ahmed amicably in his article. The use of famous poem on peace written by Sahir Ludhianvi was a catalyst to such efforts across South Asian community. Demonstrations were held in Montreal and New York. Network of peace organizations was formed. Electronic peace bulletins were published. Petitions were sent to the national leaders and newspapers. Many similar activities were initiated to make the global community aware. A network comprising Pakistanis only was established but later other peace-loving people were invited to join it. After giving an extensive detail of this network's activities, Ahmed concludes that through Internet, a true global citizenship can be enjoyed, beyond international borders, through instantaneous communication, which has now proved as 'the most unsettling invention' for jingoists. The jingoists, too, no doubt, use this invention extensively so the war has to be won on ground. The diaspora can facilitate the struggle for democracy and peace.



## **Mubarak Ali and his Work**

***Syed Jaffar Ahmed***

Historian and public scholar, Dr Mubarak Ali, emerged on the intellectual scene of Pakistan in a rather unusual manner. In the beginning of the 1980s Pakistan was experiencing the worst of its military rules which had not only usurped all fundamental rights and imposed strict ban on political activities but also subjected the country to severe draconian laws imposed in the form of Martial Law regulations, and practices in the name of Islamization. In April 1979, the former prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was executed following a biased trial which consequently led the execution to be designated as a judicial murder. The horrendous act was preceded and followed by massive arrests of the political workers, hundreds of whom were lashed in public in order to terrify the common people and political activists, and to prevent them from taking to agitation and building resistance against the authoritarian rule. A culture of persecution and fear had come to dominate the entire country. In 1981, there emerged an opposition joint front called the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). Despite severe obstacles, the MRD tried to launch a movement for the restoration of democracy in 1983. Due to reasons, the movement did not take off in all the provinces of the country. It was only in Sindh that it made an impact and spread almost throughout the province, but was brutally crushed resulting in scores of casualties and wide-scale violation of human rights. Though failed, the movement not only infused in Sindh a spirit of defiance but also encouraged the Sindhis to reassert their identity and foster their self-expression through creative literature and arts. The subsequent years saw what perhaps can be described as the renaissance of Sindhi culture. It was during this time that as a little known university teacher, Mubarak Ali, based in Hyderabad, Sindh, but not a Sindhi himself, started writing small pamphlets on themes of historical and political nature. Some of the pamphlets were written in the context of the past annals of Sindh, and were quite timely in

that respect. The pamphlets and booklets like *Kya Naomal Ghaddar Tha?*<sup>1</sup> (Was Naomal a Traitor?), *Tarikh-e-Sindh: Arab Daur-e-Hukumat*<sup>2</sup> (History of Sindh: The Arab Rule), accompanied with other writings on the history of Sindh, later, formed the book, *Sindh: Khamoshi ki Aawaz*<sup>3</sup> (Sindh: Voice of Silence). In 1983, Mubarak Ali also published *The English Factory of Sind*,<sup>4</sup> based on the extracts, pertaining to Sindh, selected from William Foster's *The English Factories of India*. Mubarak Ali's compilation enabled the researchers to benefit from an important primary source of Sindh during the British period.

The early pamphlets written by Mubarak Ali, and produced in a very modest way, questioned some of the well-known official perceptions about history and politics. He touched upon themes which had so far been held as the established facts, and questioned them with strong historical arguments. At once, his writings started getting attention and he became a popular writer. One interesting fact about these writings was that the author did not have sufficient resources to seek the services of a calligrapher to compose his articles. He wrote his essays in his own handwriting or perhaps, at times, also sought support from someone else. These hand-written texts were then printed on ordinary paper as booklets and were circulated through bookshops known more for selling oppositional and left-wing literature.

Beginning from there, Mubarak Ali gradually extended his clientele covering political workers, activists, and students. While he was getting popular acclaim in the political circles, he was progressively becoming a persona non-grata in his own alma-mater from where he had not only graduated but which he had also served as a teacher for years. However, to the milestones of his careers we shall return. Here, one would like to highlight his intellectual development and contribution in the most creative subsequent years.

After getting early retirement from his university he soon moved to Lahore. There, he devoted himself to full-time writing and producing books. Now, he had also found relatively better and established publishers who could produce his books in a more professional manner. His readership started increasing and within a few years his books were read in the nooks and corners of the country. This can aptly be described as the beginning of the

emergence of a Pakistani public scholar. The genre was not new as popular writings in different walks of life and disciplines, were not uncommon in Pakistan. The religious organizations and pamphleteers had always been involved in producing popular literature carrying their particular point of view and message. The radical and leftist popular literature also had its role. But history had never been the subject of popular discourse in Pakistan; at best what was assumed to be history, and was circulated among the popular readers, was in fact historical fiction and romantic-religious narratives which did cultivate religious emotions and frenzy but were miles away from actual historical content. This also explains why Mubarak Ali was so enthusiastically welcomed by a readership that longed for answers of questions that had perplexed it for long. These included questions pertaining to the medieval history, invasion of Sindh and other regions of India by Muslim invaders, nature of the Muslim rule, character of the colonial rule, social and political role of the Muslim reformers, freedom movement, two-nation theory, etc. With the passage of time the canvas of his work spread to cover the themes of more general nature and interests like peace, feudalism, historical experiences of other societies, etc. He also wrote extensively on old and contemporary trends in historiography.

### Focus on Sindh

After his brief earlier works on Sindh, it seems that, Mubarak Ali's interest in Sindh and its history grew with the passage of time. Now, he delved more systematically into the diverse western accounts of Sindh, comparing the observations of different travelers. In his book, *Sindh ki Samaji aur Saqqafati Tarikh*<sup>5</sup> (A Social and Cultural History of Sindh), he selected these accounts according to topics such as geography, climate, agricultural system, animals, means of communications, people and their castes, cultural traits and religious affiliations, cities, rulers, the system of governance, etc. Compilation of different authors according to these headings provided a rich compendium of comparative information about Sindh.

Another book, *Sindh Observed*,<sup>6</sup> carried the selection of research articles published in the *Journal of Sindh Historical Society*. These articles discussed the ancient, medieval and the

wrote a detailed introduction for Shibli Nomani and Dr Om Prakash Parshad's articles on Aurangzeb, and the two were jointly published as, *Aurangzeb Alamgir*.<sup>28</sup> It is interesting that most of his earlier works on the Mughal period generally focused the dynasty, the respective monarchs, royal court, and the systems of governance and economy. It seems that it was during this period, while these works were being published, that he strongly felt the need to shift the overall focus of his work from the royalty to the people.

### Historiography

After attending to some of the more immediate and pressing themes of his times like the past and present of Sindh, and the issue of relationship between the state and religion, or religious ideology, Mubarak Ali chose to focus the trends of history-writing, first in Pakistan and later in India and elsewhere. As this was a very wide field, he spent a major part of his time in 1990s and thereafter, in surveying and writing on it. This was also a permanent issue in Pakistan since independence because devising of curricula was quite strictly controlled by the successive central governments who were apparently convinced that the imparting of a uniform centralized ideological narrative was necessary for national cohesion and integration. In most of the cases, the regional languages were not given their due rights; there was a severe deficit of appreciation of the regional cultures despite the fact that they carried a rich historical heritage of literature, folklore, music, etc. Consequently, the history texts as taught in schools and colleges were quite selective, exclusive and often ridden with biases of different types. The weaknesses of the history courses and the fallacies as well as the distortions they carried were highlighted only by a few people. K.K. Aziz<sup>29</sup> thoroughly combed through the syllabi of various levels of education to identify such distortions and mishaps. His pioneering work received much attention at least at the level of intelligentsia and civil society. In the later years others also followed suit. A collective exercise with a group of at least nineteen scholars was carried out by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), an Islamabad-based think tank and non-governmental organization. Its report, *Subtle Subversion, The State of Curricula and Textbooks in*

*Pakistan*,<sup>30</sup> became the subject of a controversy given its bold stance about the unfortunate one-sided and biased contents of the courses of history and other subjects taught in the country. The report recommended radical changes in the syllabi, removing the hate-material and the distortions in order to make the courses more objective and rational. The rationalism pleaded by the report was objected to by the traditional orthodox segment of the intelligentsia as well as a significant portion of the establishment even though the report was prepared and presented during the times of General Pervaiz Musharraf who apparently stood for liberalism and chose to promote his views on politics, society and ideology in the name of what he coined as 'enlightened moderation'. The commitment of the establishment to what it was apparently professing was exposed when soon after the publication of the SDPI report and the aggressive response it received from the conservative circles the government left no time in distancing itself from the report. It even went to the extent to denounce it when the education minister, Zubeida Jalal, whose being a woman was much played up by the Musharraf regime to project its gender consciousness and liberalism, claimed on the floor of the parliament that she was also against the report as she was herself a fundamentalist.

While K.K. Aziz and SDPI appear to be rather isolated occurrences, one person who constantly wrote on this theme for years, in the form of books, research articles and newspaper columns, was none else but Mubarak Ali. In fact writing on the trends of historiography has had consumed more of his time than any other area of history. His books on this theme number at least twenty, which shows the importance he attributed to it. An earlier work was *Tarikh aur Roshni*<sup>31</sup> (History and Light), in which first he surveyed various philosophies of history, like circular, divine, materialistic, Marxist, and other concepts of history. Then he proceeds to history-writing in Pakistan, which he describes as tragedy for he thinks that people were kept in the dark about the truth regarding various happenings of the past. He also lamented that education was given the lowest priority and educational institutions were not provided with the environment in which critical thinking could have been developed. As a result of this the educational institutions failed to examine and evaluate

independently what was taught through monotonous and officially prescribed texts.

In his book, *In the Shadow of History*,<sup>32</sup> Mubarak Ali discusses the issues of the interpretation of history, hero and hero-worship and the imperatives of understanding the significance of history in detail. Here he discusses how a conspiracy theory evolves in a society which attributes all its failures to the conspiracies of the others. He also analyses the historians who romanticize the past, in order to reclaim the past glory for a society which fails to present anything in the present which it can glorify.

*Badalti hoi Tarikh*<sup>33</sup> (Changing History) takes Mubarak Ali to what is described as people's history, a theme on which he wrote a lot subsequently. In this book he highlights the importance of people's history, the trends within this type of historiography as demonstrated in the works of western historians. He also writes about the blacks in America, the nomads and their history, the history of intellectuals, Christian missionaries, and the history of hell. These themes expanded the horizon of his readers who were being prepared to learn more about the trends of history-writing and the multifarious aspects on which historians could focus. *Tarikh kay Badaltay Nazariyat*<sup>34</sup> (The Changing Theories of History) brought under discussion various other subjects, on which historical searchlight was thrown. These subjects included: human nature, supernatural forces, animals, minorities, migration, war, rise and fall of nations, labor, etc. A section of the book also discusses how certain ideas developed in history. These included secularism, nationalism, resistance literature, enlightenment, etc. Historiography of different things continued to be surveyed in *Tarikh aur Siyasat*<sup>35</sup> (History and Politics). Its chapters focused the historiography of defeat, guilt, minority, etc. A section of the book discusses imperialism and colonialism in detail. Another section dealt with revolution, especially, the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions. Colonialism came under discussion with its wider aspects in *Tarikh Kiya Kehti Hai?*<sup>36</sup> (What does History Say?). The context here is India, its pre-colonial and post-colonial societies and the freedom movement. Mubarak Ali discusses the causes of the rise of East India Company and how India was annexed by the British. Surveying the pre-colonial social formation of India, he discusses the thesis of Oriental Despotism, as presented by Karl



Witfogel. The search for historiography of different things is also found in *History on Trial*.<sup>37</sup> Separate chapters have been devoted to the history of tears, rumors, bestowal of titles, etc. There are also themes like Akbar in Pakistani textbooks, conquerors and invades, the concept of noble family, the politics of hatred, etc. *Tarikh aur Tehqiq*<sup>38</sup> (History and Research) carries chapters on history of anger and culture of flowers. The major part of the book, however, deals with medieval Indian history and impact of colonialism on India. *Tarikh ki Awaz*<sup>39</sup> (The Voice of History) sheds light on the history of lifestyle, art, the concept of millennium, the idea of civilized and uncivilized, crimes in the name of civilization, etc.

The author also discusses a few socio-political aspects of medieval India apart from partition and its various explanations. There are also certain articles, though brief, about few enlightened scholars and writers of Pakistan, like Ali Abbas Jalalpuri, Hamza Alavi, Josh Maleehabadi, and Ghulam Kibria. Some of the pieces discuss the conflict between the west and Muslims. These elaborate the existing assumptions and explanations of the conflict, and show how the past history has been tried to be written in the context of contemporary issues involving west and the Muslims. Mubarak Ali opines that the western image of Islam has not always been the same, and that the western perceptions changed with the changes in its relationship with the Muslim world. Coming to discuss the subcontinent again, Mubarak Ali reasserts his position that having moved away from the traditional and colonial phases of historiography, the majority of the sub-continental historians are now writing the nationalist history, and with the passage of time, even this is progressively exposing its weaknesses. Eventually, he thinks, the historians will have to shift their attention to the grassroots communities, their interests and internal dynamics. In *Tarikh ki Talash*<sup>40</sup> (Search of History<sup>41</sup>), these very themes recur with renewed emphasis. In a chapter discussing the shifting relationship between religion and politics, he identifies different phases when the two converged, came in conflict with each other, or, paved the way for separate domains. Similarly he discusses the varying attitudes of the Muslims of India, depending on the nature of their interest at a given point of time, and their perceptions about their future. The articles in the book discuss, at varying

lengths, not only the history but also the historiography of the issues in question.

Issues of historiography also come under discussion in *Tarikh: Tehqiq kay Na'ay Rujhanat*<sup>42</sup> (New Trends of Research in History), in which he especially traces the long journey of Bengali self-assertion. He shows how Bengali identity asserted itself in different contexts, first, during colonialism, then during the period when East Bengal was a part of Pakistan, thereafter, amidst the rise of Bengali separatist movement, and finally, following independence of Bangladesh. The upshot of his argument is that the nationalist claims are not permanent and inflexible, rather they emerge and change in particular contexts responding to the nature of the conflict they are part of. The historians also shift their positions accordingly.

Nationalism and nationalist historiography again come under scrutiny in *Tarikh aur Aaj ki Dunya*<sup>43</sup> (History and Today's World), and, with special reference to its treatment in Pakistan Studies, in *Gumshuda Tarikh*<sup>44</sup> (Lost History). The latter book also devotes chapters on how historians have periodized history according to, mostly, the political projects at hand, and how 'others' have been looked by the historians, again, mostly, under political compulsions. Since following the 9/11, the subject of terrorism gained global currency in political debates, Mubarak Ali tried to find out how terrorism was referred to by different historians writing from different vintage points.

The debates on historiography as depicted in the books referred above, find a good convergence in *Tarikh aur Nisabi Kutub*<sup>45</sup> (History and Curricula Books), which specifically deals with how history-writing has been undertaken by the planners of educational curricula in different parts of the world. Here, Mubarak Ali covers the syllabi taught in America, Japan, Israel, and Yugoslavia, apart from Pakistan and India. The book, thematically more integrated and precise, helps conclude certain important results. Such as: almost all states influence in one or another way, the writing of history; all these states prefer a narrative which in less democratic and underdeveloped societies is imposed more visibly, through educational institutions, where as, in more advanced democratic countries the state affects the process indirectly through the media and intelligentsia, who



facilitate the cultivation of a nationalist ideology in different ways. The conflict of diverse forces within the country is also reflected in their perceived vision of history and historiography. For example, in India, the governments of Congress and BJP, whenever they succeed in coming to office, try to influence history-writing according to their perceived ideologies.

In 2007, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War of Independence of 1857 was celebrated in South Asian countries. In his book, *Tarikh kay Na'ay Zaway*<sup>46</sup> (New Dimensions of History), Mubarak Ali devoted at least seven chapters on different aspects of the War and also discussed the relevance of the study of it in our times. His interest in the history of different things continued in *Tarikh ki Aaghi*<sup>47</sup> (The Awareness of History), in which he specifically chose to write about the history of forgery, traders, epidemics, sedition, etc. The histories of smile and laughter, coal, coffee, honour-killing, etc. have been discussed in *Tarikh ki Daryaft*<sup>48</sup> (Discovery of History)

History and historiography of different aspects, components and trends of past societies remained a permanent interest that involved Mubarak Ali since he first realized the need to depart from political history. Most of his writings in this respect were in the form of small or large articles which became parts of his books as has been shown previously. But on certain themes emanating from social history he devoted full length books. *Tarikh aur Aurat*<sup>49</sup> (History and Woman), for instance, is one. The book which has gone into numerous editions showing its acceptance by a large readership begins with the place of women in history and in the evolution of civilization. Then he moves on to discuss how in different phases of history women were treated in different societies, and how the historians recorded, or for that matter, forgot to record, their role. He devotes a full chapter to the treatment of women by church, another one, on how the Sufis responded to their place in society, and, still another, on what change in her status took place after the industrial revolution. The book also discusses certain concepts and institutions in their socio-economic background. The idea of an ideal woman, superstitions among women, the harems of the past, and the institutions of prostitution as well as marriage have been discussed in detail. All these discussions show the varying nature of the society and the

Moving away from political history

consequent changes in the status of woman. It also emerges from these chapters that despite a lot that the women have gained over the years through strenuous struggle and after great sacrifices, both legally as well as socially, they have still to travel a difficult terrain and perhaps will have miles to go to ensure their equal status with men. Mubarak Ali very strongly advocates the cause of the emancipation of women, and does so, on the basis of strong historical arguments.

An interesting and equally important book is on the history of food and the etiquettes of eating. *Tarikh: Khana aur Khanay kay Adaab*<sup>50</sup> (History of Food and Etiquettes of Eating) begins with Mubarak Ali's justification of moving into this direction. He says that after his interest in political and intellectual history he is now getting more and more interested in social and cultural history, but in a way this latter type of history is also a part of human intellect. As human intellect develops, his tastes also change; the choice of food and the eating habits also reflect upon the human society and the changing nature of people's mentality. The book begins with the anthropological study of how human society discovered the possibility of proper foods, and how the manners of eating developed in the context of social settings. Since the societies comprised contradictions reflected in different social groups and classes, the access to food and the manners of eating it also varied. In class-ridden societies the culture of eating and the etiquettes of the privileged and the under-privileged classes were quite different. Similarly, various societies have had varied values of entertaining guests or taking care of the poor lot. One chapter refers to the extravaganza associated with the feasts arranged by the aristocracy or the well-to-do in contemporary societies.

*Niji Zindagi ki Tarikh*<sup>51</sup> (The History of Private Life) begins with a discussion of the importance of focusing private life as a tool of understanding the norms of a society. The introductory discussion delves into the importance as well as various aspects of the historiography of private life. The author highlights how the details of personal life reflect upon the cultural make-up of the society, its values and institutions. What place institution of family or kinship has in a given society, can also be understood through the study of personal behaviors, choices and preferences. Then, with the change in these behaviors, how the overall posture of the



society changes, and vice-versa. Here, the author draws his arguments and observations from both the Europeans and Indian societies. He also brings in the gender question and the issues of the scope of public and private spaces. The book carries separate chapters on Roman civilization, particularly with reference to its later phase which led to its downfall, and the medieval period, especially that of France, in order to show the dynamics of state-church relations and their impact on the institution of family, marriage and personal lives. This also sheds light on the eating habits as well as the sexual choices and behaviors. A separate chapter on the period of enlightenment shows how under the influence of fundamental social changes the old value system paved way for new values, wherein the concepts of equality, enlightenment and political independence influenced individuals' life and behavior. The author discusses in detail the new concepts of education, syllabi, girls' education, parenthood, puberty, the husband-wife relationship, village-city interaction, popularity, dialogue, expression of anger, concepts of honesty, friendship, honour, etc., which, under the spell of enlightenment, brought into being a different society as compared to the one it replaced.

Another book on a particular theme is *Tarikh: Thag aur Dakoo*<sup>52</sup> (History: Robbers and Dacoits), in which Mubarak Ali shows how in different social and economic backgrounds there arose the practices of robbery and dacoity, and then, how the socio-economic factors transformed these into professions. After introducing the importance of the subject and a critical evaluation of the correlation between the society, on the one hand, and robbery and dacoity on the other, he produces long passages from different English and Urdu sources, which explain the background of these practices and institutions both in the West and India.

*Ghulami aur Nasalparasti*<sup>53</sup> (Slavery and Racism) looks into the origin of slavery and its evolution in different phases of history up until its coming to an end, at least legally. Mubarak Ali also sheds light on the life patterns of the slaves in different societies particularly in Africa. He also discusses how slavery became a useful part of colonial extension and added to the enrichment of the colonial powers. He also separately discusses the economic utility of slaves in agriculture and plantation on the one hand and in the urban dwellings on the other. A very useful chapter takes

the reader in the world of resentment and revolts attempted by the slaves in different parts of the world. The chapters on racism are in fact articles written by foreign authors like Gordon Childe, who writes on the history of racism, Robin Holder, whose piece is on Australian aborigines, and Mike Penfold, who examines the racial question in the context of Ireland.

In the background of Pakistan, one thematic book of Mubarak Ali that enjoys unquestionable importance and is equally well-received by the readers, has been *Jagirdari*<sup>54</sup> (Feudalism). The book investigates the nature of European feudalism as well as its Indian counterpart that has kept sociologists involved for a long time in trying to classify it. The pre-colonial mode of production, named variously, and the colonial mode of it have been discussed by Mubarak Ali in detail. He also discusses its contemporary form as it prevails in Pakistan with its deep-seated cultural and political ramifications.

The above have been some of the works of Mubarak Ali done on either wider sets of themes or on a particular one. He has written a number of other books as well, which, by and large, fall in the same categories as identified above. Some of his works are, however, different in their content or nature. These include his interviews<sup>55</sup>, newspaper columns,<sup>56</sup> translations,<sup>57</sup> a biography<sup>58</sup>, and the details of a case filed against him,<sup>59</sup> which he discusses as a reflection on the deteriorating moral values of the Pakistani society. He has also written a lot for children, for whom he has produced two sets of illustrated history books, one, on the history of civilization, and the other, on the Indian history,<sup>60</sup> apart from host of newspaper columns in the children's section, weekly *Young World*, of daily *Dawn*.

As his books popularized in the 1980s onwards, he was invited from different parts of the country by politically active groups and the civil society organizations to deliver lectures. He spoke largely on the issues confronting the Pakistani society. For example, he spoke mostly on democratization of state and society, social reform, gender equality, egalitarianism, and importance of education. His frequent lectures across the country encouraged him to do two more things. He brought out a journal *Tarikh* (Urdu), to involve other writers too, to write objectively on themes of history and to expand the scope of historical discussion breaking

the straitjackets it had confined itself in. The other thing he did was the launching of a series of conferences in different parts of the country. What started as a very modest and individual effort, soon took a collective form and academic bodies and, at times, universities also joined to hold conferences with him. The thematic conferences focused on important subjects such as historical evolution of different regions of the country, colonialism, nationalism, martial laws in history, women and history, people's history, war and history, etc. The papers read in the conferences used to be compiled in special issues of the journal *Tarikh*. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the work of Mubarak Ali developed into a type of movement as young writers in different parts of the country gathered around him and, taking inspiration from his objective approach, took to writing with courage and a sense of direction.

### **Summing-up: overall contribution**

Here, it would be useful to summarize the overall contribution of Mubarak Ali and to see the distinctiveness of his work. The **first** important feature that makes him distinct among other historians of Pakistan is his decision to write for the common people. As a result of this decision he has chosen to write on topics which he considers important to change the misled popular perceptions held for long. Therefore, he writes continuously about nationalism, ideology, role of religion in politics, etc. Needless to say that these and similar issues needed to be addressed objectively so that the questions which haunt people may be aptly answered. In addition to selecting themes of popular concern, he adopted a simple style and a language which was free from jargons and complex narratives so that these could be followed easily by ordinary people.

The **second** important distinctive feature of his work has been his successful endeavor to impress upon the readers the fact that history is not confined to the rise and fall of the empires, the conspiracies of the courts, political developments discussed with reference to the role of the elite and treatment of the policies of the state and the governments. Though, some of his early researches were devoted to the Mughal court and the fall of the Mughal Empire, his later work moved away from the state to the



society. He successfully demonstrated that history of the society, culture, architecture, beliefs, and attitudes, may also be constructed and that historians in other countries have already produced volumes of works on such themes. He informed the Pakistani readers particularly those who did not have access to English books, that history-writing has spread in many directions providing a more holistic view of the past. Mubarak Ali himself wrote about slavery, eating habits, low castes, dacoits, racism, cities, impact of war and peace on common life, etc. **As a prolific writer he was able to produce something like 70 books.**

To further the cause of inviting interest towards history he wrote in newspapers as well. For years he contributed columns in Urdu and English newspapers. Not only this, he also wrote for children. Here also he produced illustrated books and a regular column in the children's section of the country's well-known newspaper, *Dawn*.

The **third** important fact about Mubarak Ali's work is his courage to question the inadequacies of the existing history writing tradition in Pakistan. This has often involved him in raising issues with the official narratives. He strongly believes in not having a single version to be propagated through official means. **He stands for independent research and critical inquiry. This ultimately brings to the fore multiple narratives which may not be objected to in a democratic environment as this environment but had mostly been missing in Pakistan, Mubarak Ali's efforts in this direction were beset with challenges and trials. But, looking back at what he had been able to do in the last over three decades one can safely say that his were not useless efforts.** The points he had raised in these years have been acknowledged by a wider segment of civil society, intelligentsia, and media. One can even see some impact, though not very conclusive, and ensuring, on a segment of the officialdom. It is interesting that in 2011, the federal minister of information personally invited him to do a program on the official TV channel. This he did for months only to realize that the bureaucracy both in the ministry and the television was not at all tuned or appreciative of what Mubarak Ali's program tended to do. This apart, he has been a success which becomes all the more important in the overall context of the rise of obscurantism and extremism, that has severely torn the social fabric of the country.

If Mubarak Ali's struggle to create interest in history, produce popular history, expand the horizon of historical literature in Pakistan, make objective historiography an attainable objective for the new historians, and promoting historical consciousness is considered along with his tireless practical efforts, this, undoubtedly, qualifies to be ranked as more of an intellectual and academic movement. It has certainly made its impact, the ramification of which can be noted very easily and will be noted more in future.

### **Trials of personal life**

Here, it would not be out of order if one briefly follows the milestones of the journey Mubarak Ali has undertaken in his personal life. Though, his academic pursuits and contributions to the intellectual reform of the society have had profound impact, his life has been full of trials and tribulations. Mubarak Ali was born in the state of Tonk in Rajasthan, India. His date of birth as recorded in his school was 21 April 1941. In his brief autobiographical work, *Dar Dar Thokar Khaey* published in 1996 he recollects the fond memories of Tonk which was a small state with a settled life. His was a middle class family. His Pathan ancestors came to India from Pishin during the Mughal period. The family had a modest living. His father had acquired traditional education and was also a holder of the certificate of traditional medicine, but he never practiced it. He was employed in the service of the state and had close access to the *nawab* of the state. The feudal environment of the state was the setting in which Mubarak Ali grew, visiting Nazar Bagh, reading books in the state's library that excelled in valuable manuscripts apart from thousands of books. His father was also fond of classical literature which he also brought home. This enabled young Ali to develop a taste for mythological stories, which, years later, he had to abandon and replace with the realistic accounts of the past.

Mubarak Ali's family got uprooted after partition of 1947. He along with a few members of the family migrated to Pakistan in 1952. The family began its struggle for survival with limited resources. Due to dislocation and difficulties faced by the family in settling down, Mubarak Ali lost three precious years following which he finally got admission in grade five in a local school in

Hyderabad. Soon he gave this up and got admission in an oriental college to pursue the traditional degree of *adeeb* which enabled a student to qualify for a matriculation degree after passing the matriculation examination of English only. In 1956, he passed the examination of *adeeb*. The next year, he acquired the matriculation degree after passing the exam of English. This was also the time when his family was facing severe hardships. Whatever money his father could bring from India was lost when his business failed due to inexperience, so much so that his mother had to sell her jewelry. In order to sustain himself and his family Mubarak Ali started teaching in a school but this could not continue as the owner was reluctant to give him the promised salary. Now he started working as the office secretary of an organization, Majlis Tahaffuz-e-Akhlaq, a subsidiary body of the Jamaat-e-Islami. It was run by Wasi Mazhar Nadvi, a Jamaat member, who years later dissociated with the Jamaat and also served for awhile, as the mayor of Hyderabad. Mubarak Ali recalls how the Majlis used to ensure morality through sending legal notices to the cinema houses, asking them not to display posters with pictures of women on them. Mubarak Ali's association with the organization did not last for more than few months, and here also the reluctance of the owner to pay the salary became the main cause. After doing his matriculation, Mubarak Ali took admission in City College where he took active part in extra-curricular activities apart from giving tuitions and teaching in a school to support his family. After completing his college education he got admission in the Department of General History, in Sindh University, where he got some very good teachers who infused in him true love for the discipline of history. After doing his MA in 1963 with first class first position, he was appointed a junior lecturer in the same department. He taught in the university till 1970 when he got admission in London University but he could not continue there due to financial constraints. He was informed that the German universities did not charge tuition fee and that he could try his fate there. He did so and got admission in Ruhr University in Bochum. He shifted to Bochum in February 1972. In 1974 he visited Pakistan for a brief period during which he got married. He completed his PhD in 1976 and returned to Pakistan to resume teaching in Sindh University. However, he found it difficult to



adjust in a changed environment with the university bureaucracy taking a rigid position regarding his delayed return to the country. In 1989, he was compelled to leave the university job. He thereafter moved to Lahore where he joined the Goethe Institute as its regional director. This post he held for few years after which he devoted himself to full-time research and writing.

During his long academic and research career Mubarak Ali has traveled a lot and has delivered lectures in different countries of the world. He is a regular contributor to research journals and periodicals. His life-long struggle has won him wide acclaim particularly among those who are involved in socio-political activism. Looking at the wide audience he has been able to have for his work and the keenness with which his writings are awaited and read may not leave any doubt that his struggle has not gone in vain.

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# **History – the State of the Discipline: An Overview\***

***Sharif al Mujahid***

Of late there has been a spate of articles/studies on various aspects of the History discipline in Pakistan: teaching, text books, teachers, research, and Pakistani historiography, to name the more salient topics. They have been penned by some well known names in social science and history – in particular, by S. Akbar Zaidi,<sup>1</sup> K. K. Aziz,<sup>2</sup> M. Naeem Qureshi,<sup>3</sup> and Mubarak Ali.<sup>4</sup>

Akbar Zaidi deals with History as part of the Social Sciences and confines himself, chiefly, to a statistical analysis of books published, by four major Pakistani publishers, and of teachers in terms of their qualifications at nine public universities. K.K. Aziz and Naeem Qureshi go in for a hard look at the ground reality, focusing for the most part on nuts and bolts in respect of history teaching, syllabi and writing. Mubarak Ali shows easy familiarity with concepts, methodologies and formulations in the literature and has been extremely prolific, but his inability to get out of 'the box' in his approach has denied him a place in the mainstream Pakistani historiography. However, in his bold attempt to sustain and strengthen the somewhat nebulous trend towards a popularization of history and the writing of 'popular history'<sup>5</sup> lies his main contribution and significance.

This trend, seeking to write for a broad public and target larger audiences beyond the narrow, ivory-cloistered academic establishment, and initiated by G.M. Trevelyan and A.J.P. Taylor between the wars, has received commendation from Eric Hobsbawm, perhaps one of the best known living historians [2003], according to the *Guardian* (London). To Hobsbawm, 'the sort of ideal reader may be a construct of the educated but non-specialist reader who wants to find out about the past – is curious about the past and wishes to understand how and why the world has come to be what it is today. And where it's going'.<sup>6</sup> And this because, to quote Lewis Namier, 'the subject of history is human affairs: men in action, things which have happened and how they

happened; concrete events fixed in time and space and their grounding in the thought, and feelings of man...<sup>7</sup> – that is, the prime facts of the entire gamut of man's social existence. Hence the popular interest in history, and the need for popular history. Popularization aims at establishing a dialogue between historians and the wider public, and such dialogue alone facilitates the ideas that do matter to develop. The historians have a public to interact with and a public role to play, provided they take the public seriously and take the ideas generated by it seriously. And for these reasons, the fledgling trend towards popularization of history in Pakistan needs to be crystallized.<sup>8</sup>

### **i) Why is history relevant?**

K.K. Aziz, Naeem Qureshi and Mubarak Ali, whether briefly or at some length, have found it indispensable to discuss the utility and the social relevance of history. This especially in view of a host of questions raised from time to time – questions such as whether history is relevant to present day problems, whether it creates any, if not raises the level of, political or social consciousness, whether studying history has any utility, paying and ensuring any sort of dividend in the present day market-oriented economy.<sup>9</sup> The answer to these and other questions, vexatious as they are and seemingly pertinent as they seem, may be answered in the words of Hobsbawm. To him, 'history is a part of human life. It's a critique of two basic principles on which the modern society appears to run': (i) the highly developed 'problem-solving approach' of modern technology which considers the past completely irrelevant; and (ii) 'the buy-it-now approach' of the market-oriented consumer society.<sup>10</sup>

More important: whatever exists today has roots in the past. Thus, the present, as it stands and as it continues to unfold, has been fashioned by the past, and the present will obviously, and in turn, fashion or determine the future. After all, to quote Hill, 'We are what history has made us, and history will continue to have power over us, whether we recognize it or not'.<sup>11</sup> And, as Whitehead points out, 'Every active epoch harbours within itself the ideals, and the ways of its immediate predecessors'.<sup>12</sup> Thus, history becomes critical to both the present and the future. In consequence, history tends to provide a growing sense of

continuity and of identity with a people's ancestral, collective heritage in aggregate terms, causing, ensuring and sustaining national consciousness among the people as a whole.

This, in a sense, explains what Tristram Hunt calls 'a dramatic resurgence in the popularity of history',<sup>13</sup> in its popularization beyond the academia today. Indeed, more people are reading history today, visiting monuments, attempting to found historical museums, create heritage sites and get Unesco's recognition for such sites, and watching TV programmes with historical contents and context than ever before. The founding of History channels in some countries also, *inter alia*, provides an index to the popularity of such programmes. Nations which have had scant or little worthwhile history of their own are forced to invent history, if only to show how important they were and are, how and what they had supposedly contributed to the onward march of human civilization. In recent times Croatia presents an extreme case where its founder, Franjo Tudjman, who was himself a professional historian, had invented a host of 'phoney traditions',<sup>14</sup> if only to provide historical and intellectual ballast to the new state. And, all this because if a people ignore history they become a victim to the collective amnesia syndrome. This in turn saps the springs of their collective consciousness and emotions, which quintessentially constitute their national will to continually nurse, sustain, strengthen and incrementally crystallize their national identity, ensuring their due place in the comity of nations. And that's precisely the prime relevance of history in the first place for any people, for any nation, worth the name. And all the more so in the case of an altogether new state like Pakistan, whose mundane existence dates back to 14-15 August 1947 only and which till 1933 was not even a mere 'geographical expression', to barrow Metternich (1809-48)'s picturesque, but caustic description of Italy (or an Italian nation) during the 1840s.<sup>15</sup>

## **ii) Problems confronting the discipline**

But despite the appeal and considerable popularity of the discipline at the academic level, it has been in doldrums, especially, since the early 1970s. And this, for a host of reasons, some of which have been alluded to by K.K. Aziz, Naeem Qureshi

142 and Mubarak Ali. Briefly stated, they are as follows (though not in the order in which they are listed here):

- i) defective syllabi and courses of reading;
- ii) a serious lack of qualified teachers to teach a wide range of courses covering ancient, medieval and modern history, survey courses on other important countries/regions of the world, and economic, social and cultural history;
- iii) a paucity of, and/or inaccessibility to, original sources and the teachers' apathy to make a concerted and coordinated effort to garner such sources, and to consult even whatever is readily available;
- iv) non-availability of the entire corpus of material published in Pakistan even in the National Library, despite a depository law, not to speak of major universities' libraries or any public library;
- v) absence of a sound tradition of professional research and lack of research training<sup>16</sup> both being interdependent on one another;
- vi) Lack of compulsory language requirements for research and teaching at the university level, such as Persian for research students/scholars of medieval India or Arabic for those of Islamic history, as against the Western universities where such a language requirement is a must;
- vii) most of the research bodies being far from proactive in their performance level, churning out journals (featuring non-refereed material) rather routinely – not with a view to consciously extending the frontiers of (historical) knowledge but merely to keep the shop open and themselves in business;
- viii) an absence of history conferences and seminars which would help researchers to produce and present new research, leading to the creation of a cumulative research environment,<sup>17</sup>
- ix) An absence of a community/ committee of established historians who would continually monitor, and offer their evaluation on newly published works/studies, and whose considered opinion would discourage the counterfeit 'historical' works from publication and circulation.<sup>18</sup>
- x) a serious dearth of funding for research projects on historical subjects at the public universities level; and



- xi) lack of facilities (in terms of short or extended, purpose-built orientation courses) for providing teachers a sound grounding in the approaches, trends and techniques of New History,<sup>19</sup> and for upgrading (a) the teachers' expertise, areas of specialization, teaching techniques and research methodologies, (b) their critical abilities, familiarity with research paradigms, theoretical underpinnings, the philosophy of history and the principles of historicism and of historiography, and (c) their research aptitude, orientation, and commitment.

Predictably, the last item in the list above has an organic relationship with the trajectory of Pakistani historiography – that is, with the way it has developed, and the route it has taken, to finally arrive at its present format and state. The Pakistani historian's failure to dart out in the direction of New History, familiarize himself with new approaches and new techniques, assimilate modern trends in historiography, and to go in for innovation and experimentation is, of course, a good deal to be blamed, but this represents only one side of the coin. The obverse is no less important since it 'explains' the root cause of his most magnificent failure. Indeed, this side represents, in a substantial and significant sense, what Marx (1818-83), the great proponent of historical materialism, calls 'the tradition of all the dead generations' weighing 'like a nightmare on the brain of the living'.<sup>20</sup> Thus, having become, unwittingly or otherwise, hostage to the historiographical legacy of the past, the historian has got himself goaded inexorably to keep his vision and focus, specifically and totally, geared to that legacy, and his output routinely conform to its major strains.

### **iii) The legacy from the past**

Since without exorcizing this legacy, wholesale and all the way, we cannot possibly strike out in the New History direction, this legacy needs to be explicated and its strands identified. Of them the more important are (i) the medieval Indo-Muslim historiography, (ii) the dominant British colonial historiography in the modern period, and (iii) the Indian historiography as it developed under the impact of British historiography and was cultivated alike by both

the Hindu and Muslim academia, journalists, pamphleteers and others.

Most Sultanate (1206-1526) historians and chroniclers were, above all, preoccupied by 'the religious' significance of events,<sup>21</sup> considering them as the outworking of God's purpose in history. This, obviously, makes 'Muslim historiography in early medieval India... theocratic rather than humanist', to quote P. Hardy, an authority on medieval Muslim Indian history.<sup>22</sup> To Hardy, 'Indo-Muslim historians saw the past in individual terms.... Even when God is held responsible for what happens in history, he is seen as working through individuals, not through classes, "social forces", or the "spirit of the age"'. Furthermore, 'the historian is a scribe rather than a researcher, his work is one of transmission rather than creation'. They generally viewed the past 'as a succession of "time instants" or untouching moments rather than as a story of change, of process, of becoming'. 'The present follows the past; it is not the outcome of the past.' Thus, concludes Hardy rather condescendingly, 'Muslim historians view history as from a rearward railway observation car. They do not see where they are going nor do they presume to know, but looking back they see their journey as running on straight lines in one direction towards the present.'<sup>23</sup>

Lest all medieval Indian history, penned by Muslim historians and chroniclers, should be put down as sheer 'bad' history, it may be noted that Hardy has, somehow, somewhat 'overdone' his portrayal and assessment of the medieval strand. This he does on the basis of 'the treatment of history by five Indo-Muslim historians' (Ziya al-din Barani, Shams al-din Siraj Afif, Yahya ibn Ahmad Sirhandi, Amir Khusrau Dihlawi, and Isami). Hardy's problem, however, is, to quote his own words, that they 'did not write in an idiom which modern historians would recognize as their own, even within that sphere of political history where the value of their works have been considered greatest' (italics for emphasis).<sup>24</sup>

On two points in particular, Hardy's comments seem a little far fetched. First, the medieval Muslim historian's view of events and developments in terms of the outworking of God's purpose in history was not something peculiar to them in that age. The Portuguese chroniclers and historians as well considered history as

an aspect of theology even in subsequent centuries. What Edward Hallet Carr tells us of nineteenth century western European historians also points to a similar view, more or less. Despite Voltaire who coined the term, 'the philosophy of history', their 'inclination to ask and answer awkward questions about them [their facts] was comparatively weak. Ranke piously believed that divine providence would take care of the meaning of history if he took care of the facts; and Burckhardt with a more modern touch of cynicism observed that 'we are not initiated into the purposes of the eternal wisdom'. Professor Butterfield, as late as 1931, noted with apparent satisfaction that 'historians have reflected little upon the nature of things and even the nature of their own subject'.<sup>25</sup> Second, classes, 'social forces' and the 'spirit of the age' are concepts, basically modern which could, by no means, inform medieval historians or enter the ken of their imagination or their scholarly pursuits. Obviously, Hardy's criteria, embodying the postulates/principles of modern historicism, to assess the Indo-Muslim medieval historians is hardly appropriate. The basic question is: can you judge medieval developments, behaviour patterns, and treatment of history from the standpoint of modern postulates, principles and values? Is it not tantamount to Philips' succinct formulation of 'a backward projection of present politics'<sup>26</sup> – in this case, of values – on a theoretical plane?

Even otherwise, Professor John Dawson's assessment of Muslim medieval historiography seems more fair and balanced. In particular, he singles out 'Tarik-i-Firoz Shahi' by Shams-i Siraj about which 'little is known... beyond what is gleaned from his work' and which 'has met with scarcely any notice' among modern day historians of the period. Dawson attributes this neglect to the fact that 'Siraj enters more than usual into administrative details, and devotes some chapters to the condition of the common people – a matter of the utmost indifference to Muhammadan authors in general', adding that Siraj has also given us 'altogether a better view of the internal condition of India under a Muhammadan sovereign than is presented to us in any other work, except the *A'ian-i-Akbari*'.<sup>27</sup>

And this *A'ian-i-Akbari* brings us to the subsequent Mughal era (1526-1760).<sup>28</sup> It was an age of official histories and memoirs. It saw the historians evince a developing interest in persons,

producing numerous studies of an administrative, military, and biographical character. In this genre of studies Abul Fazal (d.1602) makes an important contribution in 'introducing social history to the extant Indo-Muslim historians' repertoire,<sup>29</sup> the most outstanding being his *A'ian-i-Akbari* itself. It 'contains invaluable information regarding Akbar's administrative measures and institutions... [and] regarding the entire fabric of Mughal administration'. Indeed, the *A'ian-i-Akbari* 'contains a good deal of material [including statistical data] which scholars would have laboriously culled out of a record room'.<sup>30</sup> There was, of course, a 'seemingly lack of objectivity' in the accounts presented by the panegyrists and the detractors of Akbar's regime like Abul Fazal and Mulla Abdul Qadir Bada'uni but despite this, 'it is not difficult to discover the truth' by juxtaposing their accounts, says Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, one welcome departure from the earlier works lay in their reflecting 'a distinctly humanist flavour', notes C.H. Philips.<sup>32</sup> If that be the case, the Mughal chroniclers could not have possibly looked at history as 'an aspect of theology' all the way, despite Philips' conclusion. However, their Portuguese counterparts, who chronicled, presumably in a fit of national pride and fervour, the voyages and adventures in the Orient of Vasco da Gama (1469-1523) and other Portuguese adventurers did consider history as an aspect of theology, and not the end-result solely of human activities.<sup>33</sup>

During the subsequent British period (1800-1947) Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859)<sup>34</sup> rather than James Mill<sup>35</sup> the utilitarian ideologue, became the model for Indian historians. This was because the former was less hostile. Beyond sharing with Elphinstone the common characteristic of being an apologist for British rule in India, Mill had consciously gone in for a philosophical and doctrinaire approach, asserting 'the importance of utilitarianism in government and power of government and law to change people'.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, Elphinstone's basically empirical approach led him, in his monumental work, to delineate the political story and nature of Indian society before and after the British conquest. Written for 'a limited circle of British readers... down to the close of the nineteenth century', self-centred in character, concentrating on British activities in India and elsewhere in Asia, 'most British historians made little attempt to

correlate the history of Britain with the process of events in India under the British, or with other extra British history, or to place the Indo-British relationship within a broad concept of historical development'. To them, the history of India had little significance beyond teaching the government 'some practical lessons for the future handling of affairs'. In other words, the thrust was on 'the nuclear significance of British political and administrative activities in India'.<sup>37</sup>

Following Elphinstone, most Indian historians sought to describe the past, merely chronicling what had happened rather than why it had happened. They did not bother to evaluate the conduct and character of the principal actors, chronicling, almost with a vengeance, merely the rise and fall of chieftains, kings, emperors and dynasties. To same extent they did focus on the army and the administrative machinery and structure, but paid little attention to the structure, condition and evolution of the society. This unidirectional approach obviously meant a blinding blackout of all dimensions of history except the political, and of equating history with mere political chronology, without taking due note of the social milieu, the cultural context, and the economic conditions, which, in a large measure, generate and spawn political events and developments. And this was the general tendency among Indian historians during the colonial period from day one.

A sub-strand of the British colonial legacy is the linear trend towards producing 'a continuous national history', a sort of a Grand Narrative, which calls for 'a unified subject matter, consecutive narrative, familiar land marks, well-marked periods and a sequence of causes and effects'. After all, the emergence of history in Britain was a direct consequence of 'a rising concept of nationality, a concern with national origins and, later, with national institutions and law',<sup>38</sup> and presenting the major benchmarks as components, leading to the evolution and emergence, of a unitary nationalism. And, for some obvious reasons, this British experience has perceptibly and routinely left a deep impact on Muslim, and, later, Pakistani, historiography, making it routinely conform to the Grand Narrative as the standard format. Add to it the (British) Historical Association's guideline (1909) that teachers of history 'should interpret the national character, the national

ideals and educate their pupils in the ethos of their own race<sup>39</sup> and we can easily identify the major inspiration behind the history syllabi, historical writings and historiography in Pakistan since her inception.

The third strand of modern Indian historiography beginning from about 1860s, except for a few notable works (e.g., Shafaat Ahmad Khan,<sup>40</sup> Yusuf Ali,<sup>41</sup> and K.M. Ashraf<sup>42</sup> on the Muslim side) was bifurcated, almost from the start. The Hindi-Urdu tussle since 1867, the Congress-Aligarh divide since 1887, the publication and popularity of Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-94)'s *Anand Math*, the proliferation of Gau-rakshini (cow-protection) Sabhas since the early 1880s, the rise of Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), his Shivaji festivals since 1890s and his penchant for imposing a Hindu-Pad Padshahi over the entire subcontinent – these developments, among others, caused the Hindu-Muslim divide, with each one being frantically in quest of a distinct identity – and nationality. An identity and nationality signifying and symbolizing, as it were, their rather divergent ethos and weltanschauung<sup>43</sup>. This divide had obviously impacted hugely on the histories of medieval India being produced by Indians – by a Jadunath Sarkar on the Hindu side and an Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi on the Muslim side.

The Hindu historians had, however, a definite edge over their Muslim counterparts, in terms of not only their early arrival in the field, but also some more critical social, political and historical factors. For one thing, being in a preponderant majority and assured of almost absolute power, if only because of their demographic dominance, in a system of representative government (initiated by the Act of 1892), the Hindus could conveniently claim an authentic Indian origin. But could the Muslims do, demographically overwhelmed, educationally backward and economically depressed as they were? Therefore, their 'growing historical consciousness' came to hinge upon 'a consciousness of Islamic rather than Indian history', to quote Wilfred Cantwell Smith<sup>44</sup>. Indeed, 'the growing historical consciousness of the Muslims of India [during the British era since 1857] has been a growing consciousness of the Islamic past'.<sup>45</sup> The same impulse inexorably goaded modern Muslim historiography to romanticize the medieval, Muslim period in Indian history, presumably, in a

desperate bid to present an 'Islamic apologetic, justifying the ways of medieval Muslims in the modern world, and, in the process, commenting on the future of Muslims in South Asia as the authors see it', to quote Hardy.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli* (1942), Qureshi 'regards the Sultanate ... as an integral expression of medieval Muslim civilization in general and emphasizes its Islamic much more than its Indian character'.<sup>47</sup> Sarkar's *Life of Aurangzeb* (1912) is cast in the same mould, but on the opposite side. For Sarkar, obviously, Shivaji is the supreme hero and Aurangzeb the arch villain. No wonder, it drew forth a spirited rejoinder, a sort of an 'apologia', from Zia-ud-din Faruki (*Aurangzeb and His Times*, 1935). Shibli's *Alamgir par ek Nazar* (1925), done at the instance of Mohamed Ali (1878-1931), the president of the Coconada Congress (1923), after the Kohat (1924) Hindu-Muslim riots, falls in the same genre.

In perspective, both Sarkar and Qureshi had routinely followed 'a backward projection of present politics' (i.e., post-1857 Hindu-Muslim relationship) approach, *a la* the Utilitarian James Mill and Alfred Lyall, to borrow C.H. Philips' formulation.<sup>48</sup> This trend had become crystallized to a point that it has held most Pakistani (and Indian) historians hostage, even after the two communities/nations had acquired statehood in 1947. This explains, for instance, the divergent approaches and end-results of Muhammad Mujeeb (*The Indian Muslims*, 1967) and I.H. Qureshi (*The Muslim Community of the Indo Pakistan subcontinent [610-1947]*, 1962), to name the two most outstanding Muslim historians of India and Pakistan. In their totality, their respective delineation of the evolution of the Muslim community in the subcontinent is at odds with each other. Despite their hugely significant contribution, they nevertheless lend themselves to reading the present into the past, and that in an attempt to get their Grand Narrative conform to the divergent Indian and Pakistani Partition perspectives. If Mujeeb marshals facts, events, evidence and arguments to build up a 'formidable' case for an integrated/composite Hindu-Muslim nationhood, Qureshi goes in for an eloquent exposition of the 'womb theory'<sup>49</sup> and the two-nation credo. They seem to underplay, if not ignore, the monumental fact that the trajectory of Indo-Muslim evolution over the centuries had in its womb both the strands and both the



possibilities – until the dice was finally and irreversibly cast in the latter's favour, by a series of bizarre developments since the adoption of the Nehru Report (1928)<sup>50</sup> by the Congress sponsored All Parties National Convention at Calcutta in December 1928-January 1929. This controversial report, which, nine years later, became the supreme credo for Congress's political conduct during its rule in the Hindu majority provinces (1937-39), represented a critical variable, a major watershed, as it were, in modern Indian history. In raising India's future body politics' edifice, it had thoughtlessly opted for a melting pot route, a unitary nationalism and a centralized structure and the Westminster model. In the Hindu provinces the Congress set up exclusive single party governments with Muslims severely consigned to political wilderness. This, obviously, held out for Muslims an outright denial in India's future dispensation, of an adequate share in power<sup>51</sup> – the quest the Muslims had been striving for since they had lost out to the British. What would, instead, have suited the prevalent Indian political trajectory the most and met the Muslim quest simultaneously was a salad-plate approach, a multi dimensional, inclusive federal constitution, and unity in diversity à la the Swiss model<sup>52</sup> – an approach 'which, instead of stifling the respective individualities of the component wholes, affords the chances of fully working out the possibilities that may be latent in them', to quote Iqbal.<sup>53</sup>

One extenuating factor that had determined the respective affective orientations of both the Mujeeb and Qureshi narratives, though, is the Partition hangover syndrome – their inherent mindset at the time that had provided the 'living documentation', the basics of the evolution of the Partition idea, and had influenced their living memory, thinking, approach and theses, formulated within a short while after the great cataclysm. That common variable in the twin works has ostensibly bestowed credibility on a backward projection of present day politics, perhaps unwittingly but certainly as a corollary. Both represented the spirit of the times, but in the respective Partition affected countries, and the spirit in the affected countries was bound to be divergent. Croce lays down that 'the present state' of one's mind 'constitutes the material, and consequently the documentation for an historical judgment and the living documentation' which he

Mujeeb and Qureshi could not go beyond their present experiences.

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carries, within himself. Obviously and inevitably, Mujeeb and Qureshi carried within their bosoms the living documentation for an integrated Indian nation and the two separate nations. And since, to quote Croce again, 'the practical requirements which underlie historical judgment' and since 'the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events [of the past] vibrate',<sup>54</sup> they could, as Ernst Cassirer asserts, not go 'beyond the conditions' of their 'present experience'. To Cassirer, as to Croce, 'Historical knowledge is the answer to definite questions, an answer which must be given by the past; but the questions themselves are put and dictated by the present – by our present intellectual interests and our present moral and social needs'. Nietzsche had likewise insisted that 'we can only explain the past by what is highest in the present'.<sup>55</sup> Thus, in framing the questions to be answered by the past, the present intellectual environment and moral and social needs are dominant. Moreover, to quote Cassirer again, 'Man lives in physical surroundings which constantly influence him and set their seal upon all the forms of his life. In order to understand his creations—his "symbolic universe"—we must constantly bear in mind this influence'.<sup>56</sup> That, in a nutshell, explains why and how the end-products of Mujeeb and Qureshi are so divergent, given the sort of questions, posed by Mujeeb and Qureshi respectively. Questions induced and determined as they were by the environment and needs in post-Partition India and Pakistan.

Even now, however, the Partition hangover syndrome continues to dominate history textbooks in both countries. Instead of a shared discourse, different narratives of the freedom movement, almost to the point of being rival discourses, are presented in them. Indeed, they are written not to enhance historical understanding, but to make the pupils 'good' Indians or Pakistanis as the case may be, a la the British Historical Association's guidelines of 1909. During the 1990s several Indian historians including Romila Thapar had protested against the increasing 'saffronization' of textbooks under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime while several scholars and writers in Pakistan have termed Pakistani textbooks brazenly biased, with one writer putting down the Pakistan Studies at the O-level as jingoistic,

Reaction to Partition syndrome

misinformed, terrible, appalling, confusing and redundant, utterly devoid of any intelligent analysis and insightful interpretation.<sup>57</sup>

In a paper at a workshop at New Delhi, Akbar Zaidi posed the all too critical twin questions. 'How is Pakistan taught and researched in India? Is this any different from the way India is taught and researched in Pakistan?'<sup>58</sup> In other words, a classic case of tweeduldum and tweeduldee, to say the least. Indeed, most writers on both sides of the great divide (including the present one) were infected by the Partition hangover syndrome for a long while, and it took some two to three decades before India and Pakistan could respectively spawn 'unorthodox' works from the Indian and Pakistani viewpoint, as the case may be – such as those by a Majumdar (1966)<sup>59</sup> here or an Ayesh Jalal (1984)<sup>60</sup> there, specifically so far as their assessment of Jinnah, the arch villain or the *prima donna* of Partition is concerned. For some obvious reasons, it was not such an uphill task in India, though.<sup>61</sup> No wonder, it took Pakistan some two decades to catch up with the emerging Indian historiographical trend.

Earlier, we have sought to delineate the historiographical legacy from the past, the major trends being a) the mediaeval Indo-Muslim historiography, b) the dominant British colonial historiography in the modern period, and c) the Indian historiography (along the Hindu-Muslim divide) as it developed under the impact of British historiography. Despite some marginal works, however, these strands have continued to determine the format and trajectory of Pakistani historiography over the past six decades, becoming almost congenital to it. Space constraints preclude pinpointing specifically the particular components in these strands that continue to dominate and impinge upon the thinking, approach and writings of Pakistani historians, but the strands' juxtaposition with the dominant tendencies in Pakistani historiography will make it all too obvious. For the most part, Philip's formulation – viz., a backward projection of present day politics – continues to rule the roost, though.

#### iv) The way ahead

For now, the all-important question is: how to exorcize and lay unto eternal rest this ghost which embodies the dominant, enervating legacy of the past? Apart from addressing the problems

alluded to above, by creating the requisite research environment. More specifically, by getting the teachers systemically equipped for and firmly committed to research and students research oriented from their collegiate days. And all this by initiating them to historiography through a systematic, calibrated process of study, seminars, short or extended specialized orientation courses, workshops, etc., from the B.A. level onwards. The history teachers beginning with that level must be required to familiarize themselves progressively with macro works (such as those by Ibn Khaldun, Gibbon, Spengler, Wells, and Toynbee) and consult the on-going debate on the epistemology, theory and principles of History, especially, in History and Theory and Philosophy and History. Of utmost importance in the need to introduce to both the teachers and students the theorists, paradigm builders and giants in the field and the basic works in historiography – such as Peter Barke (New Perspectives on Historical Writing), Harry Elmer Barnes (A History of Historical Writing), Geoffrey Barraclough (An Introduction to Contemporary History), Marc Bloch (Historian's Craft), J.B. Bury (Selected Essays of J. B. Bury), Jacob Burckhardt (On History and Historians and Force and Freedom), Herbert Butterfield (Man on His Past), Norman Cantor & Richard Schneider (How to Study History), Thomas Carlyle (On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History), E.H. Carr (What is History), R.G. Collingwood (The Idea of History), Henry Steele Commager (The Nature of American Nationalism), Benedetto Croce (History as the Story of Liberty), M. C. D'Arcy (The Meaning and Matter of History: A Christian View), Will & Ariel Durant (The Lessons of History), Mircea Eliade (Cosmos and History), Mathew Fitzsimons & Alfred Pundt (The Development of Historiography), Peter Geyl (Dialogue in History), Thomas N. Guinsburg (The Dimensions of History), Carl G. Gustavson (A Preface to History), Edith Hamilton (The Greek Way to Western Civilization), Robert L. Heilbroner (The Future as History), J.H. Hexter (Reappraisals in History), Sydney Hook (The Hero in History), H. Stuart Hughes (History as Art and as Science), Charles Issawi (An Arab Philosophy of History), Walter Laqueur & George L. Mosse (The New History: Trends in Historical Research and Writing Since World War II), Harold Lubin (Heroes and Anti-heroes), Muhsin Mahdi (Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History), A. D. Momigliano (Studies in

Historiography), George H. Nadel (*Studies in the Philosophy of History*), Allan Nevins (*The World of History*), Friedrich Nietzsche (*The Use and Abuse of History*), Fazlur Rahman (*Islamic Methodology in History*), Franz Rosenthal (*A History of Muslim Historiography*), Mazheruddin Siddiqi (*The Quranic Concept of History*), Page Smith (*The Historian and History*), Fritz Stern (*The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*), David Thompson (*The Aims of History*), C. H. Williams (*The Modern History*), and Isiah Berlin, Samuel Beer, A.J.P. Taylor, L.P. Hobsbaum, Geoffrey Elton, among others. Unless the New History vision, trends and techniques get methodically introduced in our syllabi, course requirements, teaching techniques, and research perspectives, imperatives and agenda, the prospect for History as a discipline and Pakistani historiography is bound to be bleak. That 'history consists of the compilation of a maximum number of irrefutable and objective facts' is a 'nineteenth century heresy',<sup>62</sup> and this needs to be ditched in favour of the new vision, trends and techniques.

And those, who cavalierly consider history and historiography as mere tools to rouse patriotic sentiments and pander to national vanity and pretences, besides justifying and/or validating the performance of past and present rulers and regimes, may well ponder over one of our veteran historian's grim but timely warning. Almost thirty eight years ago, on 25 April 1975, Prof. Shaikh Abdul Rashid told the All Pakistan History Conference at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro:

A nation gets its history written as it deserves or desires. It would be a sad day for our people if our history in this grand 'Operation Rewrite' is made to minister to our vanity and pride by falsifying or misinterpreting our past, by suppressing the truth and suggesting falsehoods. If history is to teach by example it must present squarely and truthfully the story of our success as also our failure, our vices as well as our virtues, life stories of our heroes as well as our rebels.<sup>63</sup>

But, then, isn't it rather ironic that Professor Rashid himself suppresses General Bhau's sack of Delhi on 24 July 1760, in his *History of the Muslims of Indo-Pak Sub-continent (1707-1947)*, vol.

I, published barely three years after his Conference address? But why? Because the momentous sack represents the highest watermark of Hindu recovery of their erstwhile realm and Hindu 'retribution' against the Muslims, and the lowest for Muslim power and Muslim supremacy for over five centuries – that is, a moment of glory for Hindus and one of ignominy – and of truth – for Muslims. Neither the Hindus nor the Muslims saw it as a tussle, albeit critical, between the Marathas and the Mughals for the throne of India, but between the Hindus and Muslims in their 'deadly' encounter for supremacy in Hindustan, as indicated by Savarkar's comments in his *Hindu-Pad – Pad Shahi*.<sup>64</sup> How could, then, a Muslim historian refer to it routinely, given the overwhelming romanticization trend in our historical writing legacy alluded to above?

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This means, even otherwise serious historians sometimes lend themselves to pandering to the in-built 'national' or personal prejudices and preferences and are not sternly averse to distorting history. Yet another notable example is that of K.K. Aziz who took to such a high moral grand in his post-retirement writings. Despite his belated high-pedestalled pontificating, Aziz's numerous works are generally cast in the Pakistan-specific Grand Narrative mould, except for one major contribution: his pioneering demythologization of Iqbal as the conceiver of the Pakistan idea and the placement of Choudhary Rahmat Ali as the conceiver in the national pantheon. Sadly, but not inexplicably, though, this singular contribution has not received the attention nor the accolade it really deserves. Inexplicably though is the irony that even in his pontification era, Aziz is not averse to surrendering himself occasionally to his personal prejudices and preferences. Consider, for, instance, the following comment:

Thus Pakistan was subjected to the double yoke of Aligarh imperialism and an Urdu colonialism, both more aggressive and rampant than British imperialism and English (language) colonialism. Aggressive, this time the foreign imperialists had the same colour of the skin as the Pakistani and because they claimed to be natives, not foreigners (though they were foreigners and also more haughty than the British). Rampant, partly because

the complex-ridden Punjab chose to stand up in their support (thus annoying and alienating the smaller provinces), and partly because the country, desperately in search of a national language, decided in favour of Urdu (thus driving East Pakistan out of the federation). About 8 per cent population of Pakistan, now beginning to call itself a separate nationality, wants to impose its language and culture on the other 92 per cent.<sup>65</sup>

*Inter alia*, while one tends to concur with Mubarak Ali in a great many things, especially his condemnation of the straight-jacket ideological boundaries fixation,<sup>66</sup> one wishes that since charity begins at home he also de-ideologizes his approach a bit,<sup>67</sup> in the first place. Even so, these marginal comments are by no means meant to detract from their respective contributions which are hugely significant, but only to pinpoint the pitfalls which some of our best known historians, occasionally, relapse into. This means that so overwhelming is the dead weight of the past even now that it could induce or push even seasoned historians to go off the track to suppress the truth and/or churn out a historical, but explosive stuff.

In tandem, three recent publications call far notice: (i) Hamida Khuhro, *Mohammad Ayub Khuhro: A Life of Courage in Politics* (1998);<sup>68</sup> (ii) M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (1999)<sup>69</sup> and Sikandar Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader: Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan* (2008).<sup>70</sup>

'A major breakthrough in the historiography of the Pakistan Movement', Ilhan Niaz hopes, 'that Hayat's worthy contribution to the literature on the Pakistan movement and political leadership stirs debate and encourages other to utilize theoretical perspectives for the study of South Asian history. The Charismatic Leader is not only a much needed breath of fresh air but also a stimulating and solid treatment of Jinnah from which students, scholars and interested readers can benefit greatly.'<sup>71</sup>

A landmark work of painstaking research and meticulous scholarship, based on over five hundred published and unpublished primary and secondary sources, Hayat is bound to survive as long as scholars and researchers are swayed by Jinnah's



rather inexplicable rise to power during the epochal 1937-47 decade. And therein lies the prime significance of Hayat's work.

Naeem Qureshi is an exceedingly comprehensive and authoritative work, and is arguably a primary source book on this pivotal movement. Encyclopedic in nature, it is a veritable factual thicket. Loading his narrative with tons and tons of empirical data and that obviously, endlessly and almost without discrimination, Naeem Qureshi bids fair to out-Rankeing Ranke, and that almost with a vengeance. An omnibus approach usually results in an uneven emphasis at places, and this becomes all too evident when he assigns some 50 pages to the hijrat movement of 1920 which, he acknowledges, hardly affected the Khilafat movement while only 13 pages in an appendix to the Mopilla rebellion of 1921 which was instrumental in the movement's unraveling. More important: the creator of the narrative—the critical centre-piece in any historical reconstruction, according to Croce, Carr, Cassirer and others—is himself missing altogether. However, Naeem Qureshi has been extensively reviewed, both here and abroad. More encouraging, he has a condensed version to boot.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, Khuhro is by far the most comprehensive and authoritative biography of any Pakistani political leader including Jinnah. On Jinnah the two most outstanding works are rather obvious: Bolitho<sup>73</sup> and Wolpert.<sup>74</sup> Bolitho was able to recreate Jinnah on the basis of anecdotes and information culled from interviews with some 200 people who knew Jinnah personally – a singular achievement in itself. That enabled him to preserve for posterity a treasure trove of oral history, both in his work and in his Diary, Notes and Correspondence.<sup>75</sup> Yet when it comes to its significance, one tends to agree with Percival Spear, the well-known SOAS historian:

Enough has been said to show that this book is neither complete nor authoritative as a political record, nor wholly satisfying as a personal story. It is as a political and personal interpretation that it will retain its place in the literature of Pakistan. For behind an omission noted here or a misunderstanding there arises the profile of a man clear-cut, finely-proportioned and dominating. If Mr.

Bolitho has not written a full life he has certainly sketched a vivid portrait.<sup>76</sup>

And that in an elegant prose, seldom matched by any other author on Jinnah.

In contrast, the much acclaimed Wolpert<sup>77</sup> is a full length biography, chronological, continuous and extremely readable. But, all said and done, it is essentially a political biography, a mere skeleton of the bench-marks in Jinnah's life and political career, interspersed deftly by patches of thin biographical ice over the entire work. Hence John Kenneth Galbraith's rather terse comment:

No one certainly will think him negligent as to detail; he could, however, have given more thought to what is really needed. Good history is not every conversation that was held, every trip that was taken, every meeting that was attended. And the author has also a disturbing tendency to interrupt his solid, decent prose with an occasional thrust into grandiose expression and metaphor. Mountbatten with his brilliant staff of experts was soon to be launched on the fastest mission of major political savagery ever performed by one nation on the body politic of another.<sup>78</sup>

Hence, neither of them compares favourably with Lord Kinross' *Ataturk* (1964),<sup>79</sup> the biography of another founder of an almost 'new state', Modern Turkey, during the First World War's traumatic aftermath.

To return to Khuhro. Highly educated and groomed for some forty years as a historian, Hamida Khuhro shows easy familiarity with concepts, methodology and formulations. She also utilizes every conceivable but acceptable technique and mechanism to compile a really competent, albeit a bit laudatory, biography of her father. And she succeeds – but only almost, and that for a not too inexplicable a lapse. The daughter in her seeks or seems to peep out of the pages oft and anon, to bail out the father. But one should be grateful for her delineation of the whole gamut of Sindh's physical, sociological, cultural, political and economic landscape in chapter one, which helps us understand the trajectory of Sindh's evolution during the twentieth century a

notch or two better. However, even in the case of this major work, there is something for students of history to ponder over. Was it seriously taken notice of by the academia? How many reviews did it induce? Only three notable ones that I know of – by David Page in *Dawn*, Tariq Rahman in *The News*, and Syed Jaffar Ahmed in *Jang*.

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To conclude, then. It's high time that Pakistani historians recognized that the discipline has come a long way since Ranke (1795-1885) and 'the nineteenth century fetishism of facts' complimented 'and justified by a fetishism of documents', as also since the 1909 British Historical guideline which called for interpreting the national character, the national ethos and educating their pupils in the ethos of their own race – trends which spawned the Grand Narrative genre of historical writing. As Carr has pointed out, neither untiring and unending accumulation of facts, nor tomes of compilations of documents constitute history. 'The historian is neither the humble slave, nor the tyrannical master, of his facts.' 'The facts, whether found in documents or not have still to be processed by the historian' before they become historical facts. (This is affirmed by Cassirer in his assertion: 'If we knew all the facts in their chronological order we should have a general scheme and a skeleton of history; but we should not have its real life. Yet an understanding of human life is the general theme and the ultimate aim of historical knowledge.') This processing becomes possible but through interpretation, and this calls for a grounding in the philosophy of history. Since Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), the Italian philosopher, began to command a 'considerable vogue' in France and Great Britain after 1920, a philosophical and theoretical approach has carved for itself the central place in the discipline, and that to the point that A.L. Rowse, in his George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures, considered Winston Churchill's *World Crisis* – his book about the First World War – inferior to Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* 'in one respect: it had no philosophy of history behind it'. Hence the prime need today is for the Pakistani historians and history educators to go in for a systematic and calibrated grounding in the concepts, paradigms and theoretical formulations in the discipline.<sup>80</sup>

positive on historical  
works coming out of Pakistan

## History – the State of the Discipline: an Overview

Though it is beyond the scope of the present paper, I have yet commented, albeit briefly, on the works of some well known Pakistani historians. They have been referred to, if only because their works largely exemplify some of the major trends in Pakistani historiography. On the whole, however, their labours and outputs, despite some inherent flaws and occasional lapses, indicate a positive trend. Indeed, their works and approaches augur well. They signify that Pakistan has, finally, arrived at the threshold of what Milton calls the open marketplace of ideas. And that heralds the onset of a more conducive and less fettered climate for debate, discussion and interpretation. This is, also, affirmed by the sheer fact that a non-professional such as the present writer could dare comment on these established historians. Even so, the progressive exorcization of the dead conformism in which we have, sadly, wallowed for the past six decades and the simultaneous ushering in of an incrementally conducive environment for the New History trends to take root need to be accompanied with renewed vigour and commitment and that to liberate ourselves from the lingering remnants and flickering shadows of the shackles of the past. Therein alone lies a future for Pakistani historiography.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> See S. Akbar Zaidi, *The Dismal State of the Social Sciences in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Council of Social Sciences [COSS], 2002), and *The Social Science in Pakistan in the 1990s* (Islamabad: COSS, 2003); See, also, his 'Teaching and Research on India and Pakistan', *Dawn*, 15 and 22 August 2004. What Zaidi says in respect of security and strategic studies is generally true of historical studies as well.
- <sup>2</sup> See K. K. Aziz, *Murder of History in Pakistan: Critique of History Text-books used in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1993); 'The University Historian' in S. Akbar Zaidi (ed.), *The State of the Social Science in Pakistan in the 1990s*, *op.cit.*, pp. 491-522; and his other publications.
- <sup>3</sup> M. Naeem Qureshi, 'Whither History: The State of the Discipline in Pakistan', in S. H. Hashmi, (ed.), *The State of Social Sciences in Pakistan* (Islamabad: COSS, 2001), pp. 109-26.

- <sup>4</sup> See Mubarak Ali, *Tarikh ki Talash* (Lahore: Fiction House, 2003); *Tarikh ki Awaaz* (Lahore: Fiction House, 2003); *Tarikh our Muarrikh* (edited) (Lahore: Fiction House, 2002); 'The content and teaching of history in Pakistan', *Dawn* (Karachi), 8 June 2003; 'The problems of conducting historical research in Pakistan', *ibid.*, 15 June 2003; 'Owning and disowning our past', *ibid.*, 6 July 2003. 'A wealth of historical sources', *ibid.*, 22 August 2004. 'History they wrote', *ibid.*, 29 May 2011; 'Political use of history', *ibid.*, 6 March 2011; 'Task of a historian', *ibid.*, 08 November 2009; 'Distortions of history and the temple issue', *ibid.*, 29 August 2009; 'Colonization of knowledge', *ibid.*, 9 June 2002; 'Digging roots', *ibid.*, 14 December 2008. See also his numerous articles in 'Chapter from history', *Dawn Magazine*, 2002-2003, and *Tarikh* (Lahore), a quarterly in Urdu he edits.
- <sup>5</sup> See Syed Jaffar Ahmed, 'Social relevance of history', 'Books and Authors', *Dawn*, 2 November 2003; and 'On writing people's history', *ibid.*, 9 June 2002.
- <sup>6</sup> Hobsbaum, in an interview with *Guardian's* Tristram Hunt, 'A man of history', *Dawn-Guardian Service*, *Dawn*, 29 June 2003; p. 23.
- <sup>7</sup> Lewis Namier, 'History and Political Culture', in Fritz Stem (ed.), *Varieties of History* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 372.
- <sup>8</sup> It was this felt need that has impelled the present author to do anniversary articles on the freedom movement and its leading lights at the semi-popular level in the national dailies for the past five decades, and to do a series of articles for the 'Chapter from history' section in *Dawn Magazine* during 2000-03. *Dawn* has over the decades given a lead in this direction; and carries the 'Chapter from history' feature in its Sunday Magazine since 1999.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. 'At the heart of the problem lies the official [Pakistani] policy framework couched in the overly developmental orientation conceived in terms of science and technology. The idea is that natural sciences as applied to industrial production lead to economic growth. A corollary of this approach is that academic research should be policy oriented. Both of these approaches are simplistic and misguided.' Mohammad Waseem 'Community of Social Scientists: The Way Ahead', *Bulletin of Council of Social Sciences Pakistan* (Islamabad), No. 5, Spring 2003, p. 1.
- <sup>10</sup> Hobsbaum's interview in *Dawn*, 29 June 2003.
- <sup>11</sup> *History Today*, xxxiv, p. 11, cited in M. Naeem Qureshi, 'Whither History ...', *op. cit.*, p.121.

- <sup>12</sup> A.N. Whitehead, 'Memories'; cited in George Allan, *The Importance of the Past* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), p.67.
- <sup>13</sup> Hobsbaum's interview, *Dawn*, 29 June 2003. This trend may be traced to 'the indisputable fact that in the short time since the American and French Revolutions, the Western world has become intensely historical', Stern, *Varieties of History*, *op. cit.*, 'Introduction', p.11.
- <sup>14</sup> Hobsbaum's interview, *loc.cit.*
- <sup>15</sup> No wonder, Fazlur Rahman, the then Education Minister, felt the dire need of producing, *ad interim*, a short history of Pakistan at the secondary and higher secondary levels and had set up, in 1949, a Board of Historians for that purpose under Mahmud Husain's chairmanship. The Board which included the leading historians (Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, A.B.A. Haleem, Moinul Haq and A. Halim) presently produced *A Short History of Hind-Pakistan* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1951). Meantime, a Pakistan Historical Society was launched in 1950, which embarked upon an ambitious 'A History of Freedom Movement' project in four volumes, covering the period: 1707-1947. The period covered indicated that Muslims (and Pakistanis) generally considered the death of Aurangzeb (1707) as the beginning of the decline or the end of Muslim power in India. The first three volumes and Part I of vol. IV were published between 1959 and 1970. *A History of Hind-Pakistan* (1951), the Society's first publication, indicated the Pakistani historians' growing concern to present the new nation with a Pakistani version of sub-continental history. *A Short History of Pakistan* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1967) in four volumes, with I. H. Qureshi as the General Editor, and Sh. Abdur Rashid, *History of the Muslims of Indo-Pak Sub-continent (1707-1947)* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1978), vol. 1, belongs to this genre. See, also, *Pakistan Historical Society: A Review of its Activities 1950-1961* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1962).
- <sup>16</sup> See Mubarak Ali, 'The problems of conducting historical research in Pakistan', *loc. cit.*
- <sup>17</sup> On the state of research in Pakistan, see K.F. Yusuf, 'Barriers on Research in Social Sciences', paper presented to the Conference on 'State of Social Sciences and Humanities: Current Scenario and Emerging Trends', Islamabad, 15-17 December 2003, mimeo.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. 'The real problem is that there is no academic community in Pakistan, even less so in the field of social sciences. There are only individual scholars whose talent is acknowledged at home and



abroad. Only a thriving academic community, capable of setting the agenda for social science research and setting policies for promotion via gradation of scholars through a careful process of peer assessment, can guarantee an upturn in the current process of decline. For that purpose, professional associations belonging to individual disciplines such as history, political science, sociology, economics, anthropology and psychology need to become operative in a real sense.' Mohammad Waseem, 'Community of Social Scientists: The Way Ahead', *loc.cit.*, p.23

<sup>19</sup> See Walter Lacquer and George L. Mosse (eds.), *The New History*, *op. cit.*, and other volumes in the series published by the *Journal of Contemporary History*.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), I: 398. Extrication from the dead weight of the past is not an altogether impossible task, though. As Benedetto Croce points out, 'The writing of histories – as Goethe once noted – is one way of getting rid of the weight of the past. Historical thought transforms it into its own material and transfigures it into its object, and the writing of history liberates us from history.' *History as the Story of Liberty* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941), p.44.

<sup>21</sup> C.H. Philips, 'Introduction', in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.6.

<sup>22</sup> P. Hardy, 'Some Studies in pre-Mughal Muslim Historiography', in *ibid.*, p.122.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.126.

<sup>24</sup> P. Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing* (London: Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 122

<sup>25</sup> E.H. Carr, *What is History*, *op. cit.*, p.20.

<sup>26</sup> Philips, 'Introduction', *loc. cit.*, p.2.

<sup>27</sup> H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its own Historians* (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, reprint, 1976), III: 269-70.

<sup>28</sup> In terms of official biographies and memoirs, it would be more appropriate to put the end of Mughal era in 1760, when, to quote Savarkar, 'the forces of Haribhaktas of Hindudom... enter[ed] Delhi in triumph and the Moslem throne and crown and standard lay hammered and rolling in dust under [General] Bhau and Vishwa [the Peshwa's eldest. son]' on 24 July 1760. Savarkar erroneously places the event in 1761. In any case, little appeared in this genre of works during the next ninety-seven years, when, finally, the erstwhile magnificent Mughal edifice was reduced to mere rubble at the British

hands in 1857. Even what little claim the Mughal emperor had to the sovereignty of India was scotched after Buxar (1764), despite the destruction of the burgeoning Maratha power at Panipat (1761), although the fiction of the Mughal empire continued till 14 September 1857 when the British forces finally stormed Delhi and took hold of Bahadur Shah, the last Mughal emperor, and his family as prisoners. V.D. Savarkar, *Hindu-Pad-Padshahi or a Review of the Hindu Empire of Maharastra* (Poona: Manohar Mahadeo Kelkar, 1942), pp.xi-xii. See, also James Burgess, *The Chronology of Modern India, 1494-1894* (Lahore: Al-Biruni, reprint, 1975), p.214. Interestingly, Bhau's sack of Delhi is often ignored by Muslim and Pakistani historians; see, e.g., Sh. Abdur Rashid, *History of the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan sub-continent (1707-1907)*, Vol. 1, op. cit. See Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *Akbar: The Architect of the Mughal Empire* (Karachi: Ma'aref Ltd., 1978).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4, 226. Interestingly, 'The Mughals did maintain records ... not only at the imperial capital, but also in 'provincial capitals and access to them was not difficult, being easily accorded on request'. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. '... Abu-i-Fadl is an avowed panegyrist and hero worshipper. The scholar in him, however, comes to the top whenever unpleasant truth is to be revealed even though the revelation is covered beneath a rigmarole of rhetoric... It [*Ain-i-Akbari*], contains invaluable information regarding Akbar's administrative measures and institutions. Without the *A'in-i Akbari*, our knowledge regarding the entire fabric of the Mughal administration would have remained sketchy and inadequate...' The difference in their statements is that Bada'uni is openly critical, whereas Abu-i-Fadl either makes no comments or is laudatory. In short there is little doubt that Bada'uni, if studied carefully, provides a good corrective of Abu-i-Fadl's eulogies.' *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Philips, 'Introduction', op.cit., pp.6-7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7

<sup>33</sup> *History of India* (1841), for which he was called 'the Tacitus of modern historians'. It was used as 'a standard text-book in the examination of the Indian Civil Service in England and the Universities in India as far back as 1866, or perhaps even earlier'. It's ninth edition [reprint] was dated 1916. Elphinstone was 'very sympathetic to the Hindus', notes Majumdar, but 'had unconcealed contempt for all Islamic institutions and the Prophet [PBUH] of Islam in particular', claims Rashid. R.C. Majumdar, 'Nationalist historians',

and Abdur Rashid, 'The Treatment of History by Muslim Historians in Mughal Official and Biographical Works', in Philips, *op. cit.*, pp. 418, 139, respectively

<sup>35</sup> *The History of India* (London, 1818; reprinted 1820, 1826, 1840, 1848). Once published, Mill 'held the field unchallenged for twenty-five years' till Elphinstone came along in 1841. To Sharma, 'Mill's generalizations about the history of India exercised the most dominant influence on later British historians'. R.S. Sharma, 'Historiography of the ancient Indian Social Order', in Philips, *op. cit.*, p.103n.

<sup>36</sup> Philips, 'Introduction', *loc. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Geoffrey Elton cited in M. Naeem Qureshi, 'Whither History...', *loc. cit.*, p.113.

<sup>39</sup> *History Today*, xxxv, p.7, cited in *ibid.* In the same vein did the University Grants Commission (UGC) laid down the following guidelines (Circular No. D 1783/2001-1C V, 12 October 2001): 'Pakistani students in correspondence with Indians for academic assistance'. 'I am directed to say that one of the security agencies has observed a growing tendency among the staff members/students of various professional institutions of India and Pakistan to communicate in different fields of mutual interest. For instance, a student of department of crop physiology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, has established illegal links with Indian experts/organizations. It is requested that all the public/private sector universities/educational institutions affiliated, registered or recognized by the University Grants Commission may kindly be advised to instruct their staff members/students to follow the government directions and immediately dispense with all illegal links with foreign experts/educational institutions. It may also be ensured that material to be exchanged be first got cleared from the ministry and no links with any foreign experts/educational institutions should be established without prior approval of UGC/Government of Pakistan.'

<sup>40</sup> *The East India trade in the XVII century in its political and economic aspects* (London, 1923); *Sources for the history of British India in the sixteenth century* (London, 1926); *John Marshall in India: notes and observations in Bengal, 1668-1672* (ed.) (London, 1927); and *History and Historians of British India* (Allahabad, 1939).

<sup>41</sup> *Life and Labour of the People of India* (London, 1907), *The Making of India* (London, 1925), and *India and Europe* (London, 1925).

- <sup>42</sup> *The Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan* (1935) and *Hindustani Muslim Siyasat par aik Nazar* (1963). See also Syed Jaffar Ahmed, 'On writing people's history', *loc. cit.*
- <sup>43</sup> For details, See Bimal Prasad, *Pathway to Partition* (New Delhi: Rajendra Prasad Academy, 2000), vol. II; and Sharif al Mujahid *Ideology of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2001), chs. 2 & 3.
- <sup>44</sup> W. Cantwell Smith, 'Modern Muslim Historical Writing in English', in Philips, *op. cit.*, p.322.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> P. Hardy, 'Modern Muslim Historical Writing in Medieval Muslim India', in Philips, *op. cit.*, p.307.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.302.
- <sup>48</sup> Philips, 'Introduction', *loc. cit.*, p. 2.
- <sup>49</sup> Sharif al Mujahid, *Quaid-i Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1981) represents, perhaps, the earliest attempt on the Pakistani side to abandon the 'womb' theory and offer an alternative interpretation for the emergence of Pakistan, see chs. I & VIII.
- <sup>50</sup> *All Parties Conference 1928: Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the principles of the Constitution for India* (Allahabad: AICC, 1928).
- <sup>51</sup> In offering the Muslim League 'not partnership but absorption' in the U.P., to quote Penderal Moon, the Congress was 'prepared to share the throne only with Muslims who consented to merge themselves in a predominantly Hindu organization'. And 'If the U.P. sample was to be the pattern of Congress's political conduct, then what would be the position of Muslims when a federal government for all-India came to be formed? There would be no room on the throne of India except for Congress and Congress's stooges.' About the Congress dominated federal set up, Jinnah prognosticated at the Patna League session on 29 December 1938: 'The Congress game with regard to Federation is very clever. If the Congress can gain control over the federal machinery, then, by means of direct and indirect powers vested in the Federal Government, the Congress would be able to reduce to nonentity the Governments of the Hon'ble Fazlul Haq in Bengal and the Hon'ble Sir Sikander Hayat Khan in the Punjab. So in the end the Congress will have seven provinces where they enjoy overwhelming numerical majority as a gift of God, and the other four provinces where Muslims dominate will be the feudatories of the Congress High Command.' Penderal Moon, *Divide and Quit* (London: Chattoo and

Windus, 1964), pp. 14-15, and Khurshid Ahmad Khan Yusufi (ed.), *Speeches, Statements and Messages of Quaid-i Azam* (Lahore: Bazm-e-Iqbal, 1996), II: 915-16.

<sup>52</sup> For excerpts from the Swiss Constitution and the Estonian Cultural autonomy Law of 5 February 1925, see R. Coupland, *The Indian Problem: Report on the Constitutional Problem in India* (New York: OUP, 1944), III: *The Future of India*, pp. 186-89.

<sup>53</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, Presidential Address (Delhi: All India Muslim League, 1945).

<sup>54</sup> Croce, *op. cit.*, p.19.

<sup>55</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1954), p.226.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.255. Finally, I would like to commend two basic criteria for judging their work: 'History is a history of passions: but if a history itself attempts to be passionate it ceases to be history'. *Ibid.*, p.241.

<sup>57</sup> For an incisive analysis, see Krishna Kumar, *Prejudice and Pride: School Histories of the Freedom Struggle in India and Pakistan* (New Delhi: Viking Penguin, 2001). See also Mubarak Ali, 'History and Hindutva Ideology', *Dawn*, 24 March 2001; Omar R. Quraishi, 'Textbooks that brainwash', *ibid.*, 14 September 2003 and 'Primacy of textbook revision' *ibid.*, 2 November 2004; Jankai Nair, 'Science' and the remaking of Indian history', *ibid.*, 21 December 2003; and Samina Wahid Perozani, 'Surviving Pakistan Studies', *ibid.*, 2 May 2004; and Nandani Sundar, 'RSS schools and how they spread hate', *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), abridged version in *Dawn*, 5 December 2004.

<sup>58</sup> S. Akbar Zaidi, 'Teaching and Research on India and Pakistan II: Domination by 'think-tanks'', *Dawn*, 22 August 2004.

<sup>59</sup> S.K. Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi: Their Role in India's Quest for Freedom* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1966).

<sup>60</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>61</sup> The Indian historians had ventured into the 'unorthodox' history realm since about the middle 1950s. R. C. Majumdar, who was appointed by the Education Ministry in 1952 for heading a board for the compilation of a history of the Indian freedom movement, resigned in 1955, 'finding it impossible to reconcile his conscience as a scholar with the political designs of his sponsors... Majumdar's researches convinced him that the Mutiny [1857, generally regarded as 'the first national war of independence'] was 'neither the first, nor

National nor a War of Independence', even as Lord Bryce, after extensive research, concluded that the 'Holy Roman Empire' was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire. 'Majumdar's scholarly debunking of the nationalist myth' came to be later epitomised in his *Sepoy Mutiny* (Calcutta, 1957) and led to a qualified approach by other authors on the 1857 Revolt such as S. B. Chaudhuri (*Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies (1857-59)* Calcutta, 1957), S. N. Sen (*Eighteen Fifty Seven*, Delhi, 1957) and H.P. Chattopadhyaya (*The Sepoy Mutiny, 1857* [Calcutta, 1957]). (For an extended discussion, see Sibnarayan Ray, 'India: after independence' in Walter Lacqueur & George L. Mosse, *The New History: Trends in Historical Research since World War I* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 123-24. (In contrast, Syed Moinul Haque, in *The Great Revolution of 1857* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1968), by far the most comprehensive and competent work, by a Pakistani proclaims by the title itself, the orthodox approach of its contents and conclusions.)

<sup>62</sup> E.H. Carr, *What is History*, op. cit., p.14.

<sup>63</sup> Sh. Abdur Rashid, *Presidential Address*, Pakistan History Conference, (University of Sind, Jamshoro, 1975), mimeo.

<sup>64</sup> To V. D. Savarkar, later President, All-India Hindu Mahasabha, this event made out "a case for the survival [of Hindus] as a nation or a social human race... in their deadly struggle with the Muhammadan power... and prove[d] their strength to seek retribution for the wrongs done to them as a nation and a race... [On] that day the Hindus won their freedom back, proved even their physical fitness to survive on equal and honourable terms". V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu-Pad-Padshahai or a Review of the Hindu Empire of Maharashtra* (Poona; Manohar Mahadeo Kelkar, 1942), 'A Foreword', pp. xii. The Foreword which was written for the first edition is dated 15 February 1912.

<sup>65</sup> Aziz, 'The University Historian', loc. cit., p. 214.

<sup>66</sup> Mubarak Ali, 'The Content and Teaching of History in Pakistan', loc. cit. One capital instance of the straight-jacket ideological boundaries fixation was the University Grants Commission's circular, *a la* the British Historical Association's guideline, to the school and college text-book writers to aim at inducing a 'pride for the nation's past, enthusiasm for the present, and an unshakeable faith in the stability and longevity of Pakistan' and to emphasize that 'the basis of Pakistan is not to be founded in racial, linguistic, or geographical factors, but, rather, in the shared experience of a common religion'. Cited in Akhter Hamid, et. al., *Mutala-i-Pakistan* (Islamabad: AIUO,



1983), pp. xi-xiii; cited in M. Naeem Qureshi, 'Whither History ...', *loc. cit.*, p.115.

See, e.g., Mubarak Ali's 'Preface' to *Jab Hukumat Qatel Karti hai* (Lahore: Rohtas Books, 1991), (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1998).

M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

(Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

SOUTHASIA Online, accessed October 2008.

M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British India: The Politics of Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan* (London: John Murray, 1954), Latest reprint: Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Since compiled: Sharif al Mujahid (ed.) *In Quest of Jinnah* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Percival Spear, 'Jinnah, The Creator of Pakistan', *The Twentieth Century*, 'Book Notes', April 1955, in *ibid.*, p. 184.

Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

John Kenneth Galbraith, 'Partition and the Birth of Pakistan', review of *Jinnah of Pakistan* by Stanley Wolpert, Section: Book World, *Washington Post*, 27 May 1984, cited in Liaquat Merchant and Sharif al Mujahid (eds.) *The Jinnah Anthology* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. 2010), p.6.

(London, 1964).

The ideas propounded and the quotes in this para are taken from Carr, *What is History*, *op.cit.*, ch. 1, except for the quote from Cassirer, p.232.

# **The Reconstructing Patriarchies: Nationalism, Religion and Women's Education\***

***Rubina Saigol***

There are widespread assumptions regarding a purported incompatibility between religious beliefs and values based on Islam and the education of women. The spate of attacks on girls' schools in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province appears to have reinforced the idea that Islam is inherently averse to the education of women. On the other hand, the education of women in developing societies is often regarded as a key development concept, indispensable for the empowerment and emancipation of women. Women's education is often promoted by the state, non-government organizations and foreign donors as the most salient feature of women's citizenship rights, and as a pivotal concern in national development.

## **Women between cultural nationalism and colonial modernity**

The tension between the provision of modern secular education to women through mass schooling, and the eagerness of religious communities to maintain control over women, whom they regard as symbols of the community, goes back to colonial times. As the colonial state in India began to secularize knowledge and laws, women came to be perceived as signs and symbols of the backwardness of local communities. Women's position in society was a popular barometer of civilization and it was argued that 'oriental backwardness' was partly due to women's low status in colonised societies.<sup>1</sup>

This charge by the colonial, modernizing state posed a dilemma for Indian nationalists, both Hindu and Muslim. On the one hand, acquiring modern knowledge of the secular sciences and

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statecraft was essential for accommodation with colonial rule, and to compete with other local communities in the race for progress, on the other the maintenance of tradition, continuity and the past was imperative to avoid the erasure of identity as a community.<sup>2</sup> Hindu nationalists resolved this dilemma by invoking a division between the home and the world.<sup>3</sup> While the public sphere, now under colonial domination, had become a modern space where the business of politics and commerce was transacted by men, the home, as the private space of the colonized, represented tradition, continuity with the past, morality and spiritual superiority. Women, as the symbols of tradition, culture, community honor, purity and morality were to be protected from the polluting influences of western culture. Modernity was not to be allowed into the home of the colonizer, the space where women performed their traditional duties away from the gaze of the corrupted public sphere of commerce.

Muslim nationalist reformers were equally concerned with the preservation of indigenous culture and tradition in the face of the onslaught of an intrusive modernity that threatened to erase their unique religious identity.<sup>4</sup> With loss of control over the public sphere, the private one was jealously guarded for it was here that the seeds of continuity resided. The pressure by the colonial state to educate women could no longer be resisted as liberal ideas of democracy, equality and liberty spread across the colonized landscape. The figure of the incarcerated, hidden, veiled and cloaked native woman, inaccessible to the gaze of the colonial state, evoked images of horror in the enlightened among the colonized as well as the colonial master.<sup>5</sup> The inner sanctum of the colonized had to be rendered up and made transparent to enable more efficient control and discipline by a state eager to restructure all aspects of the lives of the colonized.<sup>6</sup>

Indian social and nationalist reformers believed that by initiating reform in the legal and social structures to allow widow remarriage, and by prohibiting the custom of *Sati*, ending polygamy, abolishing *purdah* (veiling) and providing Indian women with modern education, the charge of 'backwardness' could be countered and such symbols of modernity and progress could be useful for nationalist reconstruction. This consciousness, argues Jayawardena, demanded an enlightened woman, a new woman who would be a

companion and friend to her husband and not merely a childbearing and childrearing, incarcerated, subordinate being;<sup>7</sup>

Thus, arguments for women's education ensued, not only for the purposes of countering the colonizer's charges, but also to achieve conservative and traditional purposes such as the creation of educated and enlightened mothers and civilized wives. Women were required to be both, traditional and modern - traditional because the roles of wives, mothers and homemakers were still considered their primary roles; and modern because mothering and housekeeping could now be done along modern, rational and scientific lines instead of being based on superstitious beliefs and practices. The purpose of modern schooling in 19th century India was thus the creation of not only *moral* motherhood but enlightened and *modern* motherhood. As Kumari Jaywardena states:

The objectives of the reformers were thus twofold: to establish in their countries a system of stable, monogamous, nuclear families with educated and employable women...and yet to ensure that women would retain a position of traditional subordination within the family.<sup>8</sup>

This education was not intended to liberate women as Jaywardena argues:

The policies of promoting women's education and the type of education provided, were not intended to promote women's emancipation or independence, but to reinforce patriarchy and the class system. The plea that education would only improve women's efficiency as wives and mothers left its indelible mark on the education policy.<sup>9</sup>

The goal of nationalist education, therefore, remained essentially conservative and primarily oriented toward the preservation of patriarchal values and norms, while its methodology acquired the form of modern mass schooling.

### **Women's education and Muslim reformers**

The first generation of Muslim reformers reflect a response not only to the decline of Muslim power and the advent of British rule, they also address the degeneration of the Muslim tradition which had become steeped in ignorance, superstitious beliefs, rituals and

magic.<sup>10</sup> These reformers included Syed Ahmad Khan, Nazeer Ahmad and Altaf Hussain Hali who sought to arrest the political, economic, cultural and social decline of Muslims through accommodation with a modern western secular education, while also retaining the aspects of religion that they believed to be essential for identity. However, despite his fervent pleas to male Muslim youth to acquire education in the secular sciences and knowledge, Syed Ahmad Khan believed that women must not be exposed to the potentially corrupting influences of such an education, and their learning should be limited only to religious instruction, household management, and domestic and motherhood skills.<sup>11</sup> Syed Ahmad Khan believed that Muslim women were not yet ready for education in the contemporary sciences like their European counterparts, and should only receive a modern education after Muslim males had been educated. He sought to keep Muslim women strictly away from the morally corrupting public sphere where the values and practices of the colonizers prevailed.

Nazeer Ahmad and Altaf Hussain Hali wrote novels exhorting Muslim women to reach for ideal Muslim womanhood as imagined by the male reformers. Nazeer Ahmad, in his famous work, *Meerat-ul-Uroos* (Bride's Mirror) created a contrast between two sisters, one a quintessential 'good' woman in possession of all the virtues of a respectable Muslim woman, and the other, a typical 'bad' woman who possesses all the vices of a wasteful, disobedient and irreligious wife.<sup>12</sup> This work was brought to the notice of the Director of Education of the Northern and Western provinces and was recommended as a textbook and guide for the education of girls. Within a period of about two years, ten thousand copies were sold and several editions published. Sections of the novel continue to be a part of state textbooks until today.

Guidebooks, texts and journals for the instruction of women within a Muslim ideal of womanhood continued to be produced and widely disseminated.<sup>13</sup> Prominent among these were Ashraf Ali Thanvi's encyclopedic work, *Bahishti Zewar* (Heavenly Adornments) and Syed Mumtaz Ali's *Huquq-un Niswan* (The Rights of Women). Thanvi's work was a detailed treatise on the regulation of women's behaviour and contained guidelines for the proper management of the household, while emphasizing individual piety. This work categorically laid out woman's secondary role and position within the

Muslim hierarchy.<sup>14</sup> Metcalf argues that while Thanvi believed that men and women were equal religiously, he staunchly averred that women's status in the home was subordinate and that their education should be tailored towards making them better housewives and mothers.<sup>15</sup>

This was a response to colonial rule where the public sphere was beyond the control and power of Muslim men, therefore the domestic and private sphere had to be reordered and reorganized to restructure Muslim power; it was by teaching women proper religion that they could be empowered to sustain Muslim families against superstition and detrimental customs on the one hand, and a modernizing English education on the other.<sup>16</sup> However, *Bahishti Zewar*, a representative of the Muslim *Ashrafia*, is regarded by other writers as a desperate attempt to retain and preserve the rapidly eroding feudal culture of veiling and incarcerating women, and maintaining control over the minute details of their daily existence.<sup>17</sup>

Mumtaz Ali, however, seemed to be ahead of his time as he referred to women's 'rights' and recommended a broadly humanistic education which would help diminish the influence of custom and superstition, while emphasizing women's rights as propagated within Islam.<sup>18</sup> His work however was received with hostility and was perceived as threatening by the elite Muslim classes in Northern India. Over a period of time women's Urdu magazines, especially *Huquq-un Niswan*, *Khatun* and *Ismat*, played a significant role in disseminating ideas of women's rights to education and knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the thrust of most of the materials in these magazines was on making women more competent homemakers, obedient wives and good mothers. The aim of most of the reformist activity of the period was on domesticating women of the well to do classes. The same refrain is discernible in the large number of poems of Akbar Allahabadi, who used a taunting and satirical tone to mock modernity and staunchly defended *purdah* and a conservative education for women oriented to their household and motherhood duties.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Pakistan's national poet, Allama Iqbal, writing in the first four decades of the twentieth century, warned against giving women the kind of education that would make them less feminine and docile.<sup>21</sup>

The male Muslim reformers were speaking mainly to a particular class composed of the *Ashrafia* belonging to Northern India. Shahida Lateef has argued that there was no single or monolithic Muslim consciousness in India as Muslim practices were regionally specific and varied according to class, but the construction of Muslim nationalism in Northern India required the erasure or denial of this diversity in order to create the sense of common identity which came to be organised around religion.<sup>22</sup> Since most reformers belonged to, and advocated, an education of respectability for the *Ashrafia*, they had to prove that education would not violate the principle of *purdah*.<sup>23</sup> Even the Begum of Bhopal, who advocated women's education to stir a deep awakening among them, insisted that *purdah* be observed in schools.<sup>24</sup> However, the notion of 'upper class charity went a long way in making female education acceptable'.<sup>25</sup> Ayesha Khan rightly observes that Muslim women who championed the cause of female education 'made repeated compromises with institutions or ideologies other than women's emancipation. They made concessions to Islam, to Muslim nationalism...and to the demands of their elite class ... the deepest current of their beliefs was subject to the demands of religion'.<sup>26</sup>

The staunchest advocates for the education of Muslim women in parts of India, whether male reformers or their female counterparts, had to perforce rely on religious arguments for promoting women's education. Very often, such arguments were overlaid with patriarchal reasoning along the lines that educating women would ensure efficient homes, obedient wives and moral mothers. The reasoning was fundamentally instrumental, and oriented to the needs of the 'Muslim nation' rather than for women's own benefit and emancipation. This kind of entry strategy of women into the discourses of the liberal state was subsequently used by some strands of the women's movement which drew upon religious justifications for the advancement of women.

### **Pakistani women's movement and the religious versus secular divide**

The feminist movement in Pakistan reflects the tensions and contradictions that arise from the pre-colonial religious justifications for women's education and advancement, and the post-colonial secular strands of feminism that seek to shun a religious framework



for women's rights.<sup>27</sup> Feminists with a secular orientation believed women's emancipation to be impossible within a religious idiom, finding religion to be inherently patriarchal and confining. Within a broadly secular framework, there are diverse strands that range all the way from Marxist and socialist feminists to those who believe in women's human rights within the paradigm of a liberal state. It must be remembered though that there are too many overlaps and complexities to lay out strict categories, and the above distinctions merely reflect trends and tendencies.

On the other hand, a number of feminists reclaim feminism within a religious cosmos of multiple meanings. Mumtaz and Shaheed have argued that since Islam is the overarching reality within which most Pakistani women live their lives, it is a context that cannot be ignored or bypassed in any analysis, understanding or activism.<sup>28</sup> Others, who work within a religious paradigm, have engaged in a process of un-reading patriarchal interpretations of the *Qur'an*.<sup>29</sup> Still others have provided alternative theological interpretations in an effort to reconcile Islam and the modernist human rights discourse.<sup>30</sup> Feminist psychotherapist, Durre Ahmad, applies a Jungian framework to argue that religion has been denigrated by positivist thinkers because of its deep connections with the feminine, emotional and subjective, as opposed to the purportedly masculine world of scientific objectivity, rationality and value-neutrality.<sup>31</sup>

In her work with the women of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Amina Jamal discerns agency and autonomy among them, and warns that secular feminists fail to grasp that women belonging to faith-based organizations negotiate with modernity on their own terms; they are not merely subordinate and oppressed women.<sup>32</sup> In a similar vein, Iqtidar, in her study of women belonging to the Jamaat-i-Islami and Jamaat ud-Daa'wa, concludes that religion is a valid category for political analysis and that women's agency is perceptible, even if not expressed as a conscious feminist position.<sup>33</sup> Borrowing from the work of Saba Mahmood (2005) on the politics of piety, these feminists refute the notion that agency must be informed by feminist consciousness and argue that, far from being coerced, women find agency and liberation by joining religious political parties, an act which provides space for activism and political engagement.

However, the approach of the feminists who seek to reconcile their feminism with faith-based politics, or work within a religious framework, has been challenged by a new generation of feminists located within a secular feminist tradition. Fauzia Gardezi offered an early critique of the WAF movement in Pakistan by arguing that the women's movement encountered problems trying to function within an Islamic framework inherently opposed to women's interests, and by failing to incorporate feminist knowledge and principles sufficiently into the movement.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Afiya Zia argues that the ascendancy of a new feminism, located in Islamic discourse and 'non-confrontational, privatized and personalized', whose aim is to 'empower' women within Islam, is not a post-9/11 development as is often assumed.<sup>35</sup> Rather, it is the result of 'unresolved debates on the issue of religion within the progressive women's movement'. It is the accommodation of religion-based feminist arguments by the primarily secular feminist movement of the 1980s, that paved the way legitimizing such voices and, in the process, marginalizing its own agenda. Arguing that the new re-constructionist politics of feminism that seeks to separate negative cultural practices from 'pure' religion, ultimately pays a price for 'such a project is willing to sacrifice if it does not fit the cultural, spiritual or political requirements of an increasingly conservative and anti women agenda of the religio-political forces in Pakistan'.<sup>36</sup>

Nazish Brohi, in her study of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Aml (MMA), a six-party religious alliance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, notes that while the MMA failed to condemn violence against women, including sexual violence, its response to rape, gang rape and harassment was to severely limit and minimize their interactions with men, thereby reproducing patriarchy, segregation and division.<sup>37</sup> In her critique of the Al-Huda movement in Pakistan and internationally, Sadaf Ahmad concludes that while this organization has been successful in highlighting and redefining women's Muslim identity, and associating it with Pakistani identity, the movement aims to create a monolithic culture and instills particular values and behaviours that may be at variance with other ways of being Muslim for which there is no space.<sup>38</sup> Farida Shaheed, while noting that women do not constitute a homogenous group and are separated by class and culture, points out that:

A significant number of women themselves subscribe to the views of religiously defined groups. Indeed many women are active proponents of such views. And, as seen in the Al-Hafsa case, a number of women experience activism that seeks to control women as a group, as a personally empowering process.<sup>39</sup>

In the Jamia Hafsa case alluded to here large numbers of women students, who carried batons, kidnapped, threatened and committed other acts of violence in Islamabad, all in the name of religion. This violent 'empowerment' finally ended with 'Operation Silence' in July 2007 when the state used unbridled violence of its own to end their siege of the madrassa. Al-Huda and Al-Hafsa may be two very different kinds of women's religious movements, nevertheless, both seem to reproduce and reinforce conservative cultures of patriarchy that ultimately seek to subordinate them.

In spite of the deep suspicion of faith-based politics among secular feminists, Nighat Khan outlines some of the dilemmas of working in an environment where Islam is the dominant religion of the majority community, and the state is defined within its parameters.<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to argue that the personal is political, while upholding a secular position which strictly separates the private from public and personal from political, and more so in a context where there is no Church from which to separate the state.<sup>41</sup> The interpenetration of the public and private is much greater in Pakistan as compared with countries where the two are kept relatively, though not completely, apart. In fact, Jamal argues that the modernizing state and secular nationalism have strengthened patriarchal control over women by re-creating the private and public domains, with the former representing culture and tradition, and the latter the legal-political arena.<sup>42</sup> Shaheed argues that everyday life blurs the lines that divide the conceptual separation of the political from cultural, social and economic, and religious groups actively support and collude in inscribing religion into the legal apparatus.<sup>43</sup> Shaheed cautions against the use of the 'faith-based' versus 'non-faith based' binary as it 'feeds into the agenda of the self-appointed guardians of religion (in this case Islam) who promote themselves as 'faith based' to the exclusion of all others as non-believers'.<sup>44</sup> It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate religious and non-religious

domains in a country where religion has become a hegemonic discourse, not only at the political level but also in civil society.<sup>45</sup>

### **Women's education in faith-based organizations**

As regards women's education in 'faith-based' organizations, very few systematic studies have been carried out. While there has been a growing interest in *madrassa* education since 9/11, and *madrassa* reforms have generated much public debate, there have been few attempts to explore women's *madrassas*. Studies of *madrassas* have focused either on religion and violence,<sup>46</sup> promotion of sectarianism<sup>47</sup> or as a social entity with a specific socio-economic role.<sup>48</sup> However, the Jamia Hafsa events of 2007 generated an interest in studying girls' religious seminaries, and Muhammad Farooq carried out a study of the *Wafaq-ul-Madaris* Board Curriculum (Deobandi) for girls.<sup>49</sup>

Using a Foucauldian post-structuralist perspective, Farooq found that women's *madrassas* represent a total institution which disciplines, punishes, regulates and arranges women in a manner that suits the aims of the *madrassa* in creating docile and subservient bodies. The *Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum is different for boys and girls. Girls are given less education than boys and research is not considered necessary for them. The entire curriculum and syllabus for girls revolves around the notions of homemaking, wifehood, obedience, subservience to male authority and a secondary status in the social hierarchy. Most of the *madrassa* leaders and managers are men and the teaching and training is premised on value education through the curriculum, but also through inculcating *Aadab* and etiquette (specific manners required of good Muslim women). This study reveals that women's education in religious settings is organized around the specific patriarchal ideologies espoused by the particular sect to which the *madrassa* belongs.

This kind of education is seen in contrast to the modernizing agenda of secular education adopted by most post-colonial states. Particular religious communities attempt to instill their own specific values compared to the universalizing and modernist thrust of states. However, in countries like Pakistan, where the state is defined in religious terms and Islam is the state religion, the difference between community and state education,

especially with regard to women's education, is not as steep as it might be in avowedly secular countries. The state educational system - its policies, curriculum and syllabi - reflects a deeply religious consciousness which is also steeped in patriarchal values.<sup>50</sup> However, a detailed and thorough study of religious beliefs and values regarding women's education, the manner in which these are interpreted by religious leaders, and the extent to which they are internalized or resisted by the followers has not been conducted in the past. It was to fill this gap, that the current study was conducted in the Pakistani cities of Lahore and Peshawar.

### **Faith-based organizations and the education of women**

In the first phase of the research, leaders and teachers of Shi'ite and Sunni faith-based organizations in Lahore and Peshawar were interviewed to find out how they interpret religious messages and injunctions on women's education.<sup>51</sup> In the second phase, the followers and students of the same organizations were interviewed to explore the extent to which the teachings of the leaders/teachers are internalized or rejected by them. For comparative purposes, civil society leaders and heads of development organizations were interviewed to see if their views on women's education differ significantly from those of religious organizations, and if so, in what ways. The materials being used for women's education were examined to understand the kinds of messages and meanings being conveyed through women's education.

The following questions were asked of all respondents: 1) should women receive an education? 2) If yes, what kind of education should they be given? 3) Are there any particular subjects/topics that women should/should not be taught, and why? 4) What are your views on co-education? 5) What is your opinion about the bombing and torching of girls' schools in the Malakand Division and the tribal areas? These questions were derived from Pakistan's social, cultural and political context where the state was locked in violent battles against the Taliban, and a number of militant religious groups, who were believed to be bombing girls' schools and had banned women's education in Swat and other parts of the Malakand Division in the province of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa. Furthermore, there has been a raging public debate between secularists, modernists and conservatives over the kind of education to be imparted.

### **Should women be given education?**

The question about whether or not women should be educated received an overwhelmingly positive response. Contrary to the initial expectations of the researchers, the leaders, teachers, as well as followers, of all religious organizations expressed a strong support for women's education. The Taliban's banning of women's education seemed to have no direct bearing on the responses. A large number of the respondents said that gaining knowledge is an essential duty of all Muslims, men and women. However, the reasons given for educating women varied considerably, and ranged from the idea that education is a basic need and a woman's right to the instrumental view that educated women nurture an educated nation. The differences in reasoning were discernible within the same organization, as the following responses from women belonging to the Jamat-e-Islami demonstrate:

'Education is a woman's right and responsibility.'

'The *Qur'an* considers women the creators of the human race. No one can deny that women bring up the nation in their laps and this is a national duty.'

Another perspective is offered by a woman belonging to the well to do, urban Al-Huda:

'Yes, women must be educated. Mothers are very eager to get their children educated as they learn personal hygiene.'

This response reflects an appeal to motherhood as well as to the middle class notion of personal hygiene. A member of the cross-sectarian Minhaj-ul-Quran which caters to the educated middle classes asserted gender equality in religion by saying that 'In Islam it is a duty to be educated and both men and women have been addressed equally. There is no discrimination in education.' Several women gave examples of the Prophet's (PBUH) wife Hazrat Ayesha and his daughter, Hazrat Fatima, who taught other women, and many pointed out that Hazrat Zainab had actually debated against a king in open court. These examples were designed to bolster the view that Islam enjoins education upon

women. The Shi'ite organizations were even more emphatic in their support for women's education and equality, and argued that Islam has recommended an education for everyone, otherwise an economic slowdown can occur. Even the lower class, highly conservative Jamat-ud-Daa'wa supported women's access to education and considered it to be a religious duty.

Similar results were obtained in Peshawar despite the initial assumption that people there would be generally more conservative and less amenable to the idea of women's education, especially since the JUI is the religio-political party that nurtured the Taliban. A JUI (S) leader contended that Islam makes no distinction between men and women and that there are now more *madrassas* for women than ever before. Some of the reasoning observed in Peshawar is interesting in that it is based on a concept of reward. Respondents asserted that if a man educates his concubine and then frees and marries her, his blessings would be doubled. Another man informed the researchers that if a man educates two daughters, he would be allowed in heaven. Women's education here appears as a transactional relation between God and man in a system of reward and punishment. However, the instrumental view that educated women make better mothers and wives was a recurring theme in Peshawar as much as in Lahore. A Shi'ite leader in Peshawar argued that women must be educated at all costs in both worldly and religious knowledge.

### **What kind of education should be imparted to women?**

While there were hardly any serious differences in the responses to whether or not women should be educated, there were marked gender differences with regard to the kind of education that should be given to women and the subjects and topics that should or should not be taught. An overwhelming majority of respondents emphasized the importance of religious education as a necessary component along with worldly subjects. However, a substantial number of those interviewed stressed differences between men and women that must be taken into account. For example, a man from the Jamat-e-Islami said the following:

Allah has made man the breadwinner and woman is the weaker sex. When a man returns home tired, a mere glance from the woman takes away all his troubles. This



is nature's creation. Allah has not given the West or anyone else the right to go against this law and the difference between men and women must be acknowledged and kept in mind when they are educated.

Most of the respondents who mentioned that there were some 'natural' differences between men and women that should determine the kind of education they receive, supported medicine and teaching for women as respectable subjects. For example, a man belonging to the Jamat-ud-Daa'wa said the following:

All kinds of education is permitted. There should be some difference because women have their own departments. A woman has her own skills and her own nature. She should specialize in the work that she is required to do. She should not be made to study things that are used in work she won't do. A woman can be a good doctor, nurse or teacher and should be trained in these areas.

The reasoning was that women doctors and teachers are needed to attend to female patients and impart instruction to girl students. The two professions were considered respectable and well-suited to women's nature. However, education for certain other professions was considered inappropriate for women, for example, it was considered distasteful that they should become drivers, engineers or enter industry where they could potentially mix with men. Women belonging to Al-Huda recommended that women should be taught to be moral, well-mannered, polite and kind-hearted, a character-building education often emphasized in missionary schools where many women belonging to elite classes were educated in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Some women belonging to Al-Huda also suggested that education should be tailored towards the improvement of women's economic status in life. Keeping in mind women's 'delicate nature' was also mentioned by some women members of the Shi'ite Jamia Minhaj-ul-Hussain.

A number of male respondents emphasized that women should receive education in home economics and the domestic sciences, while none of the female respondents suggested this. The

following is a typical example of the masculine conception of women's gender roles:

Home Economics is obviously only for women, not for boys. When we want to bring up girls according to our own context, then we know what kind of syllabus to make... Allah has made woman the weaker sex so physically and mentally she is not suited for hard labor. Woman has been given most respect by Islam... A lady doctor or professor is good but if you put her in the wrong profession society suffers. Men are also distracted from their focus. We should not take a pattern on women's education that is handed down from above. So-called 'progress' is taking us towards westernization and we are just imitating them.

This extract from an interview with a JI leader reflects the anxiety that if women were to be given an education unsuited to their perceived gender roles, society would suffer in this 'imitation of the west'. The idea that pollution and corruption comes from the outside, mainly from the West, was a recurring theme among many of the men who seemed concerned about keeping Muslim women 'feminine'. In sharp contrast to this, a woman belonging to Al-Huda said:

Subjects like home economics and domestic sciences are useless. They should be taught the subjects that they want to study instead of wasting time on these.

A woman belonging to the much more liberal Shi'ite organization, Jamia Minhaj-ul-Hussain, expressed similar sentiments:

They must be free to study all subjects. Women should be allowed to become doctors, engineers, pilots, army officers or anything else. If we go through Islamic history we'll find a lot of examples of women contesting the rulers of their time, fighting wars, helping wounded soldiers in battle, trading along with men independently or as partners.

However, a Shi'ite male, who belongs to Jamia Al-Muntazar, expressed sentiments that resemble the ones articulated by Sunni men:

Women don't have to engage in trade. We have to see which work suits men and what suits women. All women in society know this and they should learn what is useful for them and men should learn what is useful for them.

Interestingly, very similar ideas were articulated by men belonging to the cross-sectarian and fairly liberal, Minhaj-ul-Quran:

Subjects should according to gender needs. Women should not do boxing and men should not be involved in childcare. Women make excellent teachers and men are better in the army. In Engineering also only men should go.

Another male respondent, also a member of Minhaj-ul-Quran said the following:

Subjects should be based on the psychological and physical needs of the genders. Physics, chemistry and biology can be studied by both. However, economics should be studied by men and home economics by women. Women are better at housekeeping and childcare. Men are better suited to work outside the home. Women make better teachers than men.

However, a woman member of the same organization seems to disagree:

Women should get all kinds of education, even if space has to be explored and they should go into science, engineering, medicine, teaching and everything. Hazrat Fatimah even gave water to the injured during battle.

Arguments based on the gender division of labor and separate spheres keep recurring within men's responses with a fair level of consistency within and across organizations. On the contrary, women appear to be equally consistent in their view that when it comes to learning, there is no difference between the two. A slightly more nuanced perspective of the issue comes, surprisingly, from Jamat-ud-Daa'wa, where woman's education is upheld except in cases where her body and sexuality are exploited for profit:

Islam does not prevent women from going into any field. In Islam women can go into the battlefield and fight. They can give water to the wounded and can bandage the injured. In Islam women can also go into

the army. But a woman should not be exploited and not be made to sit at the reception to get good business. She should not be turned into a showpiece as Islam forbids this

In Peshawar the responses to the question about the kind of education women can receive, and the subjects that may be allowed, were relative more conservative. The following is a response by a male member of JUI-S:

A man only educates himself but a woman educates the whole family. But religious education is important in which girls should be educated on how to take care of their husbands and their in-laws and what are the laws of Allah one should abide by. The present formal education is not right for girls as it is spreading immoral behavior, they have abandoned *pardah*; I think wearing the *hijab* is very important as it will enable girls/women to go out. Even within the educational institutions there should be strict adherence to *pardah*.

The concern with morality and chastity seems to be greater in the more conservative city of Peshawar, especially among religious organizations like the JUI-S which instructed the Taliban. Formal education is denounced because of its potential to violate the sanctity of veiling and create the possibility of moral transgression. The following responses offer some insights:

JUI-S female teacher:

Women's education should be limited to that prescribed by our religion and within the confines of *pardah*.

JUI-F female teacher:

Education should be religious and is important to spread the teachings of Islam, if it is only limited to worldly education then there is no use.

JUI-S female teacher:

I think that girls should only get primary education, if there is a need to get more, she should only get a higher education in religion to become an *alima*, since we only need more people to spread the religion.

However, even in Peshawar, the Shi'ite respondents appear to be more liberal with regard to women's education. The following

responses by Shi'ite males depict a mind-set that is much more supportive of all kinds of education for women:

Education is very important for girls and both religious and secular are important, we have children who come to our *madrassas* but we encourage them to go to schools and only spend an hour here so that they are well-versed in our history and beliefs. Nowadays, women have also entered the armed forces in our country. I think usually girls do better in any area they choose to enter. Look at the example of Iran which is a theocratic state, but women are highly visible in all fields.

Girls education is must this is a time when they should be educated in both formal and religious education and this is what Islam says too – when it says go to China there was no religious education in China so the allusion was to get non-religious education too – one woman trains the whole family – in our *madrassas* we are giving computer based education to women.

The responses of the followers and students of the organizations were virtual repetitions of the perspectives and views of the leaders and teachers showing a high level of internalization of religious messages. An overview of the responses to the question of what women may or may not be taught reveals that there is a gender difference in the way in which women are perceived. Men, who rely on women's labor in the home, seem to emphasize home economics education and one that is oriented to household and wifehood duties, while women consistently emphasize their right to learn all kinds of secular subjects to be able to enter any field of endeavor. Interestingly, women seem to think that home sciences are a useless waste of time as such skills are usually best learned at home from female relatives.

Women do not perceive themselves as the delicate and weaker sex for whom certain subjects and professions are unsuitable. However, men regard some areas such as science, engineering, sports and the army, as male domains. Women invoke Islamic history to prove that Muslim women participated in battles, politics as well as judicial and other functions. There seems to be some difference between Sunni and Shi'ite males for the latter appear to be much

more open to the idea of women learning all kinds of subjects and entering any field of endeavor. However, the Shi'ite sample was too small to reach definite conclusions and a separate study would be required to find out if there are systematic sectarian differences with regard to gender.

### **Co-education versus segregation of the sexes**

The issue of segregated versus co-education seemed to elicit a great deal of anxiety around moral transgression and the fear of loss of purity and piety. Co-education was upbraided by virtually every respondent in all the religious organizations. One of the frequently expressed fears was that co-education would violate the injunctions against *hijab*, therefore 'it is better to stay away from what is strictly forbidden...it is better for the two to remain separate'. However, another reason for supporting sex segregated education that was offered by many female respondents was that women perform better in single sex institutions which exist in western countries also. One woman from JI expressed her strong support for Jamia Hafsa:

Even Britain and America have separate universities and colleges for girls. We had Jamia Hafsa. There were no arms there. There were only thousands of women studying the *Quran*. But it was destroyed by our rulers.

Another reason for opposition to co-education was articulated by a member of Al-Huda:

In co-education students don't take education seriously. They develop sex consciousness at a young age. Segregation is better except at the primary level, but as they grow older it is not good. Allah enjoins *purdah* on us.

Underlying the anxiety over co-education is a fear of sexuality and the potential for the violation of moral norms. The concern with a budding sexuality was voiced by several women respondents, especially those who belonged to Al-Huda. Members of Minhaj-ul-Quran argued that co-education would create an immoral environment and violate the norms of modesty and chastity. One male respondent from Minhaj-ul-Quran expressed the fear of female anatomy and its propensity to beguile and entice men. While the fear of the free mingling of the sexes, and of the capacity of the woman's body to lead men astray, kept recurring among male respondents,

one woman from Minhaj-ul-Quran pointed out that immorality is also present in single sex institutions.

The Shi'ite organization, Minhaj-ul-Hussain concurred with Sunni organizations regarding the age at which co-education may be permissible, that is, either at the primary or at university levels. Co-education during the crucial pubertal years seemed to create the most fear. On the other hand, one Shi'ite woman from the same organization believed that co-education is working fine in Islamic countries and is a problem only in the immoral western culture. All the male respondents of the Jamat-ud-Daa'wa were strongly opposed to co-education and expressed fears of moral degeneration, unbridled sexuality and sin that could destroy the value system of Pakistan's 'pure' culture.

The fear of moral decay and decadence was even greater in Peshawar. The following response by a member of JUI reflects extreme sexual anxiety and the possible destruction of family values:

No co-education is not good as things are not right in our society anyway, for instance I know that a daughter and father in Karachi were watching cable television and following a program that they were watching, they ended up having sex; then there is another example of how even a brother and sister committed adultery, this is due to co-education which provides the grounds for sex.

The fears of an immoral environment, sexual transgressions, decadent behavior and decay of family values were evident in the responses of the followers and students also. Nevertheless, one follower of Al-Huda said: 'What is wrong with it? Women have fought wars alongside men', and another woman from Minhaj-ul-Quran did not find anything wrong with co-education up to certain levels and under certain conditions. The Shi'ite Imamia Students' Organization supported co-education as long as *purdah* is observed and preferably when children are older and can distinguish right from wrong. The strongest support for co-education came from a woman who belongs to the Shi'ite Jamia Minhaj-ul-Hussain who said:

Yes, absolutely there should be co-education. It has a lot of advantages. In the West they are not stupid that they give co-education. Religion is one thing and the



world another...if a boy and girl want to get romantically involved that can happen outside an educational institution too. Obviously, young people get involved, but this can be taken positively. They are of the same age and status and understand each other. If they choose each other for marriage, what is wrong with that? Parents don't oppose marriage so why not get them married? All students are not alike. The home environment, teaching and upbringing also play a part.

Another liberal view of co-education also came from a Shi'ite woman:

In our culture there is religious education. Just because co-education would lead to friendship between boys and girls this does not mean that it should be stopped. In fact there should be all kinds of institutions, co-education and single-sex ones. There are a lot of advantages of co-education. In society men and women cannot be separated. If we are going to live together then why not get educated together.

On the other hand, a male respondent from Jamat-ud-Daa'wa expressed the fear of moral waywardness in his opposition to the intermingling of men and women:

No, there should be no co-education. Islam has clear guidance on this. It does not permit co-education. Islam says that even a woman's voice should not be heard outside the four walls of the house. No strange man should hear their voice. So how can Islam tolerate that a girl and boy should be educated together?

There seems to be a sectarian and gender divide with regard to co-education and mixing of the sexes. The Shi'ite women seem to have no problem with it and even recommend the mixing of men and women as healthy, while the Sunni (mainly Deobandi) males demonstrate enormous fear of female sexuality and condemn the potential overturning of patriarchal norms that govern sexual interactions. The overall finding was that sexual segregation is preferred by most religious respondents as it is expected to ensure the maintenance of the patriarchal social and moral order, which depends on the strict control over female sexuality and the regulation

of sexual relations within the bounds of licit sexual conduct in marriage.

### **Violence against women's education**

The issue of violence and the bombing and torching of girls' schools in the Malakand Division and other parts of Pakhtunkhwa, elicited responses that reflect ambivalence, consternation, denial and the invocation of conspiracy theories. While the act was seriously condemned across the board, there was enormous reluctance to attribute it to the Taliban and the militant groups. The constant refrain was that no Muslim could commit such an act, so this was being done by the US, NATO forces, Russians, Hindus, foreigners, the secret agencies and the army. The following is a typical response by a woman of the JI:

No brand of Islam propagates this. We are against violence. But there is a historical context of what happened in Bajaur. Their culture was under threat. In Jamia Hafsa too women and children were killed mercilessly. In Afghanistan and FATA the Russians were there so the Taliban had to be strict.

There is an implied admission here that the Taliban may have been responsible but they were forced to commit such acts because of the presence of Russians. Another woman, also from JI, said:

We don't know who is doing this bombing – the US, Taliban or the agencies. It is not right to call this act Islamic. Islam gives importance to education and lays great emphasis on it, even more than other religions.

Some of the women respondents of JI pointed out the massacre in Jamia Hafsa to underscore the point that when the state itself murders it remains unquestioned. There seemed to be a veiled attempt to absolve and condone the Taliban by highlighting the atrocities committed by the militarized state. A member of Al-Huda, an organization which presents itself as a modern, liberal and feminist version of Islam, said the following:

This is not an Afghan problem. India has opened consulates all over Afghanistan. The Hindus are doing this. They are letting criminals out of jail who are doing it. The people of Swat were peaceful and contented. The media is giving a false view. The Russians and the

US caused the problem in Afghanistan and blamed everything on the Taliban. They were educating girls inside buildings which were destroyed by the enemies. There was no place left to educate girls who can only be taught inside four walls.

Here one finds a justification for the Taliban's opposition to women's education by resorting to an argument based on safety and protection. The 'no Muslim can harm another' reasoning was repeated by members of Minhaj-ul-Quran who also expressed the suspicion that such acts of violence were being committed by outsiders or the agencies. Most of the religious respondents staunchly asserted that such acts have no basis in Islam and that this is a conspiracy to bring a bad name to religion. The same kinds of suspicions and denial were perceptible in Peshawar. The following is the view of a member of the JUI-F:

Islam does not even tell us to destroy the assets of our enemies. Bombing of schools is being done by the agencies and not Taliban; they are doing this to get assistance from external sources – I want peace and happiness in my country.

Another response from Peshawar:

Destroying girl's schools is a conspiracy against us – they want to prove that we are against women's education – these are not Muslims – no religion allows for these kinds of acts. Islam says that to take one person's life is equivalent to murdering humanity. This is a conspiracy to close down *madrassas* – it is important that all Muslims unite.

A member of the JUI-S, an organization believed to have spawned the Taliban, says:

This is being done by the Americans since I don't think the Taliban can do this; those who are doing this should be punished severely and anyone who is a Muslim cannot do this as Islam means peace. I think more and more Ulema should enter politics so that they can implement the laws of Islam.

Militant violence against women's educational institutions is relegated to the dark realms of conspiracy. There is a great deal of congruence among the leaders, teachers, students and followers of

religious organizations that no Muslim is capable of such acts and these are being committed to demonize Islam as a violent and aggressive religion that is against women. However, a woman respondent seems to suspect that this is being done by the religious militants as she says:

If those who bomb schools want that girls should stay at home and not go to school then they should just do that and not send their own girls to schools instead of bombing the schools.

In sum, it appears that all the religious organizations support the education of women as long as the curriculum and syllabus can be controlled, and women are trained to be good Muslim wives and mothers able to provide appropriate upbringing for the nation's future citizens. While both religious and secular subjects are upheld as necessary for women, there is a great deal of emphasis on a proper religious, conservative and patriarchal education. The patriarchal gender division of labor is clearly visible in that men consider an education in the domestic sciences necessary and important for women, while nearly all the women reject home economics as a useless subject. Men were far more likely to see women confined to certain gender-based roles and responsibilities as compared with women who regarded education as a right.

Men seem to be far more rooted than women in the idea of separate spheres – the public, male productive sphere and the private, female reproductive sphere. Women, on the other hand, stake a claim to education as a basic right and feel that all subjects and topics are equally relevant for them, while men feel that certain subjects are not suited for women's unique nature and gender role. Men seem to emphasize the instrumental reason for educating women as several men argued that educated women create an educated family and educated nation. Women rarely accepted the idea that there are innate and natural differences between men and women making them suitable for different vocations. On the other hand, men frequently referred to women's weaker, delicate and different nature to argue that certain professions were unsuitable for them. The gender divide among men and women was thus clearly evident in the responses to the kind of education that is deemed permissible for women. In general, however, Shi'ite men and women appeared to be more liberal and open to women's secular education

and emancipation than the Sunnis, although greater study is needed to ascertain if there is a systematic sectarian divide.

### **Patriarchal ideology and the curricula of faith-based organizations**

In order to explore how the patriarchal ideologies, reflected in the interviews with the leaders, teachers and followers of faith-based organizations, translate into curricular and textual practices, a sample of supplementary books used in Deobandi Madrassas for girls were examined for their content. The lessons contained therein were approved by the Wafaq-ul-Madaris (Deobandi).

The titles of these books, intended specifically for women, are telling with regard to the kind of 'ideal Muslim woman' that is to be nurtured. For example, one book is called *Jannati Aurat* (A Woman of Paradise) written by Maulana Mufti Muhammad Irshad Hussain. The sub-title of this book says, 'a valuable gift for Muslim women' and adds that 'the reading of this book is bound to make every home like heaven'. The book has several sections on what constitutes a virtuous woman. Some examples follow:

*A virtuous woman is one who obeys her husband; such a woman shall enter Paradise from whichever door she desires.*

*A virtuous woman is half the deen.*

*A virtuous woman is the most important form of wealth.*

*Virtuous and pious women are few and far between.*

*Virtuous women are superior to hooris.*

A good number of the topics/sections are devoted to the idea of marriage, home and ideal wifehood as subordination to the needs of the husband and capitulation to his whims and desires:

*A woman who does not marry is laanat (curse) on men.*

*A good tempered wife is best for man.*

*A woman who pleases her husband will enter heaven.*

*A husband comes first for a woman.*

*Fulfilling husband's need is first duty.*

*God loves a woman who obeys her husband.*

*Serving the husband is like attaining shahadat (martyrdom).*

*Demanding divorce makes jannat haram (forbidden) on woman.*

*woman who demands khula is a munafiq (hypocrite).  
A woman who leaves the house without husband's  
permission, laanat (curse) on her.  
Washing husband's clothes will bring blessing on her.*

Several topics in this book exhort women toward household labour and warn her about her limits and the boundaries within which she must confine her activities. There are detailed prescriptions and proscriptions regulating every aspect of her body and activity:

*Housework for women is equal to Jihad.  
Woman is protector of the home.  
Woman who goes out with fashion will be in darkness on  
qiamat (Judgement Day).  
A room is better than courtyard.  
A woman must not go out or go to janaza (funeral) and  
mazaar (shrine).  
Keep all holes – windows, doors of house – closed.  
It is haram to sit next to strange men.  
Laughing and talking to husband's brother is haram  
(forbidden).  
What kind of dopatta (head scarf) to wear.  
If cloth is thin then use astar (lining).  
When she wears a pyjama she should pray for blessing  
and forgiveness.  
Don't wear thin dopatta through which complexion can  
be seen.  
A woman's shalwar (traditional baggy pants) should be  
long enough to fall below her ankles.  
Ghungaroo (ankle bracelets worn by dancing girls) and  
jewelry are strictly forbidden.*

This short overview of the subjects and topics covered by this book reflects a deep-rooted patriarchal ideology steeped in the husband's superiority and the wife's utter submission and subordination to him. At the same time there is enormous moral anxiety over her activities lest she come into contact with strange men or is seen through the windows or doors of the house, or decorates herself for any reason outside of pleasing her husband which is her primary duty. Underlying this discourse is an enormous fear of loss of control over a woman's sexuality. Her

freedom to venture out of the house, dress as she pleases, and interact with whomsoever she desires is strictly curbed so that male control over her body may be complete. In a style reminiscent of Maulana Ashraf Thanvi's *Bahishti Zewar* (Heavenly Adornment), she is forbidden from public spaces where strange men congregate and even the smallest minutiae of her existence are regulated. However, she is allowed to partake of masculine victories and prestigious positions vicariously through serving the husband which is described as being equal to *shahadat* (holy martyrdom) and housework which is defined as being equal to *jihad* (holy war).

Another book, also used in some Deobandi Madrassas for women in Peshawar, is called *Misali Dulhan* (Ideal Bride) by Qari Jameel-ur-Rehman. This book begins with a few chapters on the position of women in Islam followed by a comparison with women's position within Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism showing how the latter do not allow women the respect and status that Islam does. This comparison is followed by homilies on being a good wife, mother, obedient daughter and efficient housekeeper. The names of some of the sections are self-evident in the ideology they aim to promote:

*Motherhood is the Road to Heaven*

*The Moment a Woman becomes a Mother she is Superior to All Angels*

*Duties to the Husband.*

*Marriage brings Respect and Dignity and Greatness.*

*Respect for the Husband.*

The sermons are followed by exhortations to women to 'speak properly', 'don't ask for too many things from the husband', 'don't complain too much', 'constantly be happy about blessings', 'keep expressing love', 'don't point out his shortcomings', 'be a good housewife', 'forget his past errors', 'don't show your temper', 'keep his desires in mind', 'don't spy on him', 'show interest in him', 'don't fast without his permission', 'follow even the most difficult orders', 'if the husband is angry, your prayers will not be accepted', 'maintain silence', 'don't fight with the husband', 'adjust with in-laws', 'don't label, don't accuse', 'try to reach a compromise with the husband', 'don't complain about economic woes and shortage of money', 'handle anger and don't keep harping on the past',

‘don’t make mountains out of molehills’, ‘cooperate with him’, ‘don’t refuse him sex’ and so on.

These pieces of advice are followed by the kinds of women men like, the characteristics of an exemplary wife, and the characteristics of a bad woman. This book also seems to follow the pattern set by Maulana Ashraf Thanvi in his famous *Bahishti Zewar*, a book often gifted to brides upon marriage. Women are asked to forego all needs, desires and wants in favor of the husband who is to be followed, loved, spoiled and catered to under all circumstances. There seems to be a remarkable continuity between the beliefs of pre-colonial cultural nationalists who sought to maintain control over what women were taught, and modern-day faith-based organizations whose perspectives on women are virtually identical to those of the cultural nationalists. There is an obvious contradiction here for development practitioners who believe women’s rights, equality and empowerment to be the pre-requisites of social development, and at the same time wish to pursue their agenda through faith-based organizations.

In *Misali Dulhan*, the husband’s status is highlighted by telling her that if Allah had allowed *Sajada* (kneeling in prayer) to any human relationship, it would have been to a husband by a wife. While one narrative is reserved for women, another one simultaneously tells men their position and privileges: the main among these is ‘You won’t be questioned about beating up a disobedient wife’ and ‘don’t go to hell trying to be modern’. Men are openly incited to violence against their wives and are told that after death they will not be questioned about beating them therefore there is no need to be modern which is the road to hell. Since domestic violence is considered a bane in modern times, this book legitimizes such violence by invoking religious sanction.

The urge to exert control over women’s bodies and sexuality is reflected in the detailed advice given to women regarding their bodies. In a book entitled *Aurton Ki Zeenat Aur Araish Kay Shariae Ahkaam* (Shariat Injunctions on How Women Should Adorn and Decorate Themselves), Maulana Sharifullah Madani lays out detailed prescriptions regarding women’s dress, cosmetics and jewelry. Women are told to avoid pants and short shirts, wear a decent length *shalwar*, and they are given information about how thin a *dopatta* may or may not be. They are



told to shun white dresses, cut sleeves and sleeveless shirts with big slits, and to avoid dressing like men, especially wearing masculine shoes! They are strictly forbidden to wear any kind of jewelry, especially anklets and ankle bracelets, which create music because of the association of such adornments with dancing girls. Women are told that if they wear a locket or ring it should have only Allah's name on it. Perfume is to be used only for the husband's pleasure and by no means should the face be shown to strangers, otherwise they would be in serious trouble on Judgment Day. Cosmetic surgery and visiting beauty parlors is off limits and during *Iddat* (three month period following a husband's death) minimum make-up or jewelry should be used. Women are advised not to speak of other women's make-up because strangers unrelated to those women could hear about it.

The obsession with women and their bodies is discernible in the other books included in the sample selected for study. A book called *Tohfa-tul-Uroos* by Maulana Allama Mahmood Mehdi Istanbuli states that even if a woman marries an adulterer, she becomes an adulterer. The book then elaborates on the 'features of a good woman', 'features of a bad woman', 'characteristics of an exemplary woman' and exhorts women by admonishing: 'don't act like a man and vice versa', 'don't be an exhibitionist', 'the conditions of sex life in Paradise', 'how strong should a woman's honor be' and the 'punishment for a disobedient wife'. The preoccupation with a 'disobedient wife' seems intense and continues across the spectrum of books written as guides for young girls. Notions of honor and punishment, combined with the specter of a disobedient wife, and 'acting like a man' reflect a deeply-entrenched fear of female sexuality that lies at the heart of the patriarchal urge to control women's bodies.

The few selected samples from the literature taught at some of the religious seminaries for girls is sufficient to advance the argument that such teaching cannot be empowering for women. On the contrary, it does the exact opposite by denying women the right of choice in their daily lives, circumscribing the freedom of movement and decrying the assertion of equality with their husbands. Women are told about their inferior and subordinate position in relation to the husband and he has control over all their choices. It is, therefore, erroneous to assume that

education, in and of itself, is an empowering strategy because empowerment in the end depends upon the *kind* of education given and the *content* of what is taught. Development practitioners and theorists who seek to provide education through faith-based organizations need to re-think their strategy in the light of the teaching given to girls in madrassas.

A brief look at some of the magazines and periodicals produced by religious organizations sheds further light on the kinds of ideology they promote with regard to women's role and status in society. A study of the militant media in Pakistan by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies provides interesting insights into the publications targeted at women.<sup>52</sup> The study reveals that at least half a dozen publications mainly target women and are focused on religious education. They promote a Jihad-based education and attempt to convince mothers, wives, sisters and daughters to encourage their male relatives to participate in *Jihad*.

One of the findings is that the language is deceptively simple and speaks to emotions. Some of these publications form parts of the main publication, for example, *Khawateen ka Islam* (Women's Islam) is distributed along with the publication 'Islam' as a supplementary magazine. On the other hand, magazines like *Tayyabaat* are monthly publications dedicated to women. The latter magazine carries stories about the atrocities committed by western societies against Muslim women, and their practices such as *purdah* (veiling) and use of the *hijab*. There are stories about how Muslim women are ill-treated in these societies to create a sense of indignation and rage among the readers.

Some of the publications discuss women's issues on which they receive advice from male Muftis (religious experts) regarding any questions they may pose. Most of the questions are around the day to day religious rituals such as the use of veiling, jewelry and cosmetics and which male relatives are entitled to see their faces and which ones are not. In *Khawateen ka Islam* telephone callers' questions are entertained and relevant replies are published.

The most significant aspect of these magazines is their frontal attack on women's rights and movements for equality and emancipation. Some opinion writers published in these magazines argue that the erroneous idea of equal rights of men and women has destroyed Islamic culture and the traditional family structure,

thereby uprooting the mainstay of Muslim society. These writers lament that some women blindly follow western practices which are detrimental for Muslim society. They exhort women to remain confined to the home and cite research which has 'proved' that women who stay at home are more self-confident. This kind of ideology contrasts directly with development discourse that emphasizes women's equality and emancipation as well as their freedom of movement.

Many of these publications by religious organizations carry serialized fictions and short stories that underscore Islamic morality and show how someone who deviated from the 'right path' suffered. Many of the stories are about the 'bad effects' of a vibrant social life and the lesson of the tale is that an overly social woman destroyed her home. Magazines like *Tayyabaat* openly criticize women who enter politics and education. One opinion column stated that 'nations which nominate a woman as a leader cannot achieve prosperity'. Since political participation is considered the cornerstone of women's empowerment within the dominant liberal development paradigm, there is a glaring contradiction between their perspectives and attitudes of religious groups.

Interestingly, many of the magazines contain advertisements – a modern, capitalist and allegedly 'immoral' practice. However, the advertisements focus on the Islamic veil and new styles and varieties of *Hijab* or *Niqab* fashions. Others promote cosmetics, medicines, food items and Islamic books. Therefore there is an ironic commercial dimension to the project of religious ideology. Other items contain food recipes which reinforce the idea that a woman's place is in the kitchen.

The majority of the writers of these magazines are women and many of them refrain from revealing their own identity. They use pen names like Umme Hammad (Mother of Hammad) or Hamsheera Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal (sister of Hafiz Iqbal). Revealing the name or identity publicly is looked upon as the loss of *pardah*, so women use the route of the pen name to preserve their veiling while putting their views out in the public – an interesting meeting of the private and public within a religious universe.

The books used by religious seminaries, the topics taught to women and the popular publications by the religious and militant media, all show a clear and irreconcilable contradiction between the liberal development discourse and faith-based education. While the religious organizations seek to construct a particular kind of woman that fits within the confines of Muslim and sectarian patriarchies, the development discourse aims to liberate women to enable them to enter the workforce, participate in politics, enter assemblies, make laws, govern, receive an education in secular knowledge and enter a profession of choice. Development regards women's emancipation and equality as necessary, while religious outfits abhor these. Development seeks the freedom of choice in marriage, profession and the number and spacing of children, while religious organizations believe this to be the prerogative of the husband. The one emphasizes equality, the other hierarchy; one promotes freedom, the other confinement; one stresses rights, the other duties. Routing development through faith-based organizations would be tantamount to denying women their most basic citizen rights granted in the fundamental law of the land.

### **Secular civil society and women's education**

For purposes of comparison, views on women's education were obtained from members of civil society who are either avowedly secular in their approach, or whose work is not specifically tailored to religion. These included academics, feminists, teachers and development practitioners. Their perspectives on women's education offer interesting contrasts and convergences with the respondents of the faith-based organizations.

When asked about whether or not women should be given an education, a male respondent in Lahore appeared amused by the question and said: 'Only the Taliban can be against women's education, nobody else could think that way'. As regards the kind of education that women should receive, Mubarak Ali, a historian, said:

Purists like Imam Ghazali and Ashraf Thanvi say women should just get religious education and not worldly, but it should be absolutely the same education and there should be no difference.

## The Reconstructing Patriarchies: Nationalism, Religion...

A leading feminist in Lahore responded in the following way to the question of the kind of education women should receive:

They should study all kinds of subjects. Religious education should be a choice but instead of religious education it should be ethics/morality or comparative religion, not just one religion.

An interesting response to the question of women's education in the domestic and home sciences was provided by Neelam Hussain, a feminist who said:

I don't find home economics or domestic science very exciting. Home economics is inappropriate for women. There should be home economics for men though. Otherwise education should be same for both.

This response is in sharp contrast to the views of religious men who advocated a domestic education for women to make them good homemakers and mothers. The feminist, on the contrary, believes that it is men who require such an education underlining the idea that men need to take equal responsibility for homemaking instead of upholding the patriarchal division of labor which locates men in the public sphere. Mubarak Ali's perspective was even stronger. As he said:

The subject of Home Economics reflects our faulty social structure in which women are limited to some tasks and men to others. It is based on the faulty idea of separate spheres. It simply justifies the gender division of labor and should not be included in the syllabus.

With regard to the issue of co-education all the secular and development practitioners in Lahore supported it, however, one feminist expressed the opinion that women are occasionally more confident, self-assured and perform better in single sex institutions where their level of comfort is higher. Nevertheless, they should be given a choice regarding the kind of institution they would like for their education. However, the men were strongly in support of co-education and argued that it creates healthy attitudes towards the opposite sex and removes suspicions and misgivings between the sexes in an otherwise segregated society. They maintained that men and women no longer remain mysterious strangers to each other and develop better understandings. This contrasts very sharply with the views of religious men who expressed deep-rooted fears of

licentiousness, immorality and transgression of moral norms in a co-education environment.

In sharp contrast to both religious men and women, secular civil society members roundly condemned the burning and bombing of girls' schools and attributed it totally to the religious militants and the Taliban. According to historian Mubarak Ali:

Unfortunately in Muslim countries women are seen as the symbol of sin, as Eve. They are feared and there is a belief that if they become educated they would become aware, so teach them only *Qura'n* etc. This is absolutely wrong. They want to make them easy to control by keeping them from knowledge. They think it is dangerous to educate them, hence they do violence. They want to treat women as they like through violence. This is a very traditional and outdated form of Islam. Even progressive Muslims unfortunately believe in separate spheres. They are obsessed with the sexuality of women. Two women were killed by the Taliban for simply talking to each other even in a *burqa*. In their view only a woman can be loose-charactered and the state's writ has to be established. Politicians and civil society should raise a strong voice but the state itself is made up of these feudals and religious fanatics. Senators defend violence against women and assemblies use them to get votes and power. The writ is of *Sardars*. The media projects it otherwise they would not even be exposed. It will take time to stop these things. Christianity had such practices in the past but now they have stopped it. The majority blames women for all social ills in our society. Islam is a very different religion. It was presented as a complete code of life. They say real Islam was never applied and this is for all times. They claim that it's a heavenly book and cannot be challenged. They say they will bring true Islam. All this is nonsense. For anything that does not work, they say true Islam was not practiced. They say vote for me, I will bring it. They keep defending religion by saying we will bring true Islam, *Nizam e Shariah* and *Nizam e Mustafa*.

Development practitioners in Peshawar focused more on the general low quality of education and the low priority accorded to it in the national budget. A woman parliamentarian outlined the problem thus:

A minimum of 6 percent of the GDP needs to be allocated to education. Do away with the dual education system and ensure elementary education in mother tongue. Education should be made compulsory up to high school for all...increase and improve outreach especially for girls...security of schools especially of girls in remote areas should be ensured...technical training and special incentives for teachers...Higher education needs special attention encouraging research...in short the education policy and implementation standards need serious review and improvement.

Regarding the issue of a segregated versus co-education system, a development consultant said the following:

Segregation in our society is not really relevant in Islam as during Hajj women and men are together. But sometimes, segregated education is better for girls and boys since both perform better in single sex schools since some gender issues are not reinforced.

Another response highlighted an interesting aspect of how some donor agencies in Pakistan reinforce the gender division of roles through development projects:

The west has discriminatory policies – in their own countries they have both kinds of schools, segregated and non-segregated, but through some projects here under the guise of being culturally sensitive they run programs – same-sex schools – which reinforce patriarchy all over again and then blame our culture for it.

It seems that those who do not subscribe strongly to a religious worldview support a secular education for girls that can provide them equal opportunities with men in any field. They generally oppose educational sex segregation, except when the aim is to enable girls to receive an education in a non-threatening environment. These respondents held the Taliban and religious

militants responsible for the violence against girls' institutions and explained that it comes from ancient Arabic tribal values that have been superimposed on society. There were significant differences in the approach and perspectives of the secular respondents as compared to religious ones both in Peshawar and Lahore.

To summarize the main findings of the study on women's education in Peshawar and Lahore, the following tentative conclusions can be drawn: 1) Both religious and secular respondents support women's education but for very different reasons; 2) religious and secular respondents recommend very different kinds of education for girls based on their respective worldviews; 3) religious and secular respondents have opposing views on the issue of segregated versus co-education with the former staunchly opposed to co-education and the latter generally in favor of it; 4) religious and secular/civil society members attribute the bombing and torching of girls' schools to entirely different causes, with the former invoking conspiracy theories blaming foreigners, and the latter squarely blaming the Taliban and religious militants; 5) There are gender-specific differences among religious men and women with regard to the kind of education that women should be given; men's views correspond far more closely to the patriarchal gendered division of labor than those of religious women. Among the civil society and secular respondents there are no observable gender-based differences with regard to women's education.

### **Reflections on the findings**

The mainstream development discourse regards education as a modernizing and liberating force capable of ushering in progress and prosperity in society. Most donor agencies active in developing countries underline the central importance of education in creating a modern, enlightened and progressive society where productive forces would be unleashed through the spread of mass schooling. Women's education, in particular, is perceived as a major development concept capable of enhancing women's productive capacity, empowerment and emancipation. It is also generally believed that women's contribution to national economic and political development would increase if they were to be given an education. A large number of formal and non-formal educational initiatives have been undertaken by donors, NGOs and the government in developing societies for the



literacy and education of girls and women. Lack of education among women in developing societies is often viewed as a major impediment to the development of the country as a whole.<sup>53</sup>

There is a growing perception among development practitioners that the reason that women's education initiatives have not been successful in unleashing productive forces in society is that the dimensions of culture and religion have been ignored while formulating and planning educational interventions. Since a great deal of the resistance to a modern, secular education has come from religious and traditional communities, the assumption is that if somehow culture, religion and tradition could be woven into the educational package, and development could be re-routed through these channels, it would be more fruitful as it would not violate local and cultural sensitivities. In Afghanistan, for instance, the values of *Jehad*, martyrdom and war were incorporated into the curriculum for girls' education in order to make their literacy palatable to the patriarchal Afghan men. The finding in this case was that the infusion of conservative and religious values of war and martyrdom served to reinforce patriarchal values on the one hand, and militarism and warlike values on the other.<sup>54</sup> In this case, education was reduced to the narrow concept of mere schooling rather than being seen in the broader sense of the development of intellectual faculties, critical thinking and a liberating experience.

The results of the current study demonstrate that the hope of introducing universal education among women by incorporating cultural, religious and customary values is misplaced. Faith-based organizations have learned to re-define, adjust and re-orient themselves in the face of growing criticism that they fuel militancy and inculcate outdated, conservative and violent values. They have all espoused the cause of education but, in a manner reminiscent of the cultural nationalists who countered the colonial state's objections by educating women, they have kept strict control over the subject matter that would be taught. In order to make the education of women palatable and acceptable, they emphasize a religious and conservative education that reinforces the very patriarchal values and beliefs about the subordinate roles of women that the development world seeks to dismantle. By stressing household and mothering education for women along with religious values, leaders and ideologues of the faith-based organizations seek to re-construct the

patriarchal division of labor that associates women with the private reproductive sphere and men with the public productive realm. The subordinate status of women that religious leaders advocate becomes even more entrenched through such schooling.

The modern system of mass schooling thus becomes a vehicle for reinforcing traditional, conservative and patriarchal norms and values, rather than a vehicle for change. The same trend can be observed in the public schooling system of the state which, instead of inculcating the values of equality, freedom and justice for women, has served to reinforce religious values and norms that subordinate women.<sup>55</sup> As Nosheen Ali has demonstrated, the public school system, steeped in a sectarian and narrow worldview, stirred up riots in the Northern Areas and reproduced religious conflict and state repression.<sup>56</sup> It is imperative, therefore, that the curricula and syllabi of the faith-based, non-formal as well as formal schools undergo radical transformation if any change is to occur. By simply reviewing and fine tuning pedagogical methods no positive change can occur because as long as the content is conservative and patriarchal, the efficient methods of dissemination would be that much more dangerous. Furthermore, as long as centralized public examinations are based on rote learned material to be regurgitated faithfully on the examination paper, the current textbooks and materials would perform be internalized by the students.

There seems to be a marked continuity between the imperatives of pre-colonial cultural nationalism, post-colonial state policies, and the aims of the faith-based organizations in terms of containing and controlling female sexuality and the right of women to make choices in life, through the mechanism of mass schooling. In each case, 'modern' schooling systems seem to have been adopted, but with strict control over what women should or should not learn. The goal in each case appears to be to maintain control over the private sphere - of the colonized in the case of pre-colonial nationalists; over the lower and lower middle classes in the case of the national security state; and over the community (religious, sectarian) in the case of the leaders of the faith-based organizations in Pakistan.

In each case, power in the public sphere had been ceded elsewhere. For the cultural nationalists political, economic and commercial power resided with the colonizer therefore the only

space where personal patriarchal power could be asserted was the private sphere of the family which represented continuity and connections with the past. For the post-colonial state, political and economic sovereignty appeared to lie increasingly with global powers, and the only arena of exerting state power was the domestic sphere with the family forming the core unit of policymaking. For the religious and sectarian communities, likewise, power in the political, economic and commercial spheres seemed to lie with the state and foreign powers, with the domestic, familial and private sphere being the only one amenable to control and domination. The conflict over who dominates the private sphere, and controls women's choices and rights, still continues with the global development and militarist thrust claiming to liberate women from the clutches of local communities, cultures and traditions; the national state balancing the competing claims of global powers and local communities over women's rights and liberties, and the local communities equally determined to maintain a measure of autonomy by preserving precisely the sphere in which they exercise virtually unlimited power.

In each case, there seems to be an urge to preserve and protect the home which became symbolic of tradition, culture and customs defining the nation, state and/or the community. Hence, neither the cultural nationalists, nor the post-colonial state or local religious or cultural communities could afford to lose control over the vital institution of the home and family. Control over this institution implied control and domination over women who came to symbolize culture, tradition and continuity as a part of home. Nevertheless, the public and private spheres have managed to interpenetrate and are not as dichotomously divided as they might appear. Global development and state policies do penetrate households, while communities attempt to make their voice heard through the national parliaments, governments, and finally through violence.

The development paradigm of education by incorporating religious and cultural values therefore requires a radical re-thinking. It is, in the end, not an empowering strategy. Education must become the road to liberation and not the path to further shackling of women. Thus, all three components of the educational code – curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation – would need to be sufficiently altered and brought in line with a modern, liberal and secular

orientation to achieve the goal of women's empowerment and participation in national development. Since the educational bureaucracy is the largest one in Pakistan, and has tremendous outreach, with schools in virtually every village and hamlet across the country, it makes far more sense to reform the state school system than focus on faith-based organizations which are by definition sectarian and divisive.

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# **Orientalism and Colonial State in Punjab: The New Order of Things**

***Nadeem Omar Tarar***

Theories of Oriental despotism provided the much-needed justifications for the East India Company to back its claims in the British parliament for the continued possession and extension of its rule in India. The alleged irrational institutions of Punjab, the use of capricious authority, and administrative disarray were made to appear to the British public as resulting in widespread anarchy and sufferings for the masses, engendering popular public support for colonialism. Masking imperial relations in the garb of civilizing the 'primitive' populations, the theories of Oriental despotism portrayed indigenous Indian rulers as irrational savages and defined the objective of the colonial rule as to restore *order* in a situation of chaos. Contrary to colonial and nationalist history which type cast the Punjabi rulers as Oriental despots, the political career of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the last sovereign ruler of pre-colonial Punjab, eulogized in his life time as 'the Bonaparte of the East' is situated in the lineaments of the rise of new mode of disciplinary power. Concerned with the technical transformation of individual behavior and bodies through institutional control, the disciplinary power was co-incidental with the inception moments of the colonial rule in the late nineteenth century Punjab.

The formation of colonial bureaucracy of the British East India Company in the eighteenth and nineteenth century India as an ensemble of knowledge and power led to the building up of exhaustive storehouses of information of the Indian territory and society. By the time of conquest of Punjab in 1849, the Company had become the generator of a historically specific colonial discourse, which validated and determined claims to authentic knowledge on the basis of scientific rationality. With the transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Crown in 1857, and the re-organization of the ranks of the Indian Civil Service, a new crop of Englishmen entered Punjab to turn the early romantic fascination of 'picturesque India' into enumerative

*ensemble  
of power and  
knowledge*



obsessions of census and surveys.

### **Oriental despotism and the construction of cultural differences in Punjab**

The government of Lahore is a pure despotism, and the entire direction of its affairs, foreign or domestic is ....on the *tongue* of his Highness... His correspondence with foreign states, as well as his own functionaries, is solely dictated by himself; and, though *illiterate*, he exercises a minute criticism on correcting the diction of his secretaries.<sup>1</sup>

In seventeenth century European Enlightenment thought, Oriental despotism was the central category that constituted the essence of government in the non-western world.<sup>2</sup> Since the times of Aristotle and the ancient Greeks, despotism has been described as a 'style of governance in which legitimate royal power was nearly the same as that of a master over a slave', and associated generally with Eastern Societies (especially Persia for the ancient Greeks).<sup>3</sup> In eighteenth century Europe, despotism described the way 'Oriental' states were organized and where despotic rulers, according to received wisdom, had the sole proprietorship over land, labor and natural resources of the country. The lack of rational bureaucracy, an enterprising bourgeoisie, or a defined structure of political and social rights exposed the individual to the arbitrary exercise of authority by the Oriental despot. The concept of Oriental despotism, assumed to be the dominant mode of governance in Asian societies, was created through historic and essentialist constructions. It was used to characterize total absence of civil society institutions in India, without which it was not possible to break free from feudalism.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of Oriental despotism figured prominently in political discourses of British imperialism in nineteenth century India, constrained political and social behavior of the ruler – both colonial as well as indigenous – according to a set of established principles enshrined in the British constitutional and humanist values.<sup>5</sup> The entire impeachment case against Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India, initiated by Whig Parliamentarian Edmund Burke, rested on the position that Hastings had become 'infected by a racial-viral disease, something very closely related to Oriental despotism' that caused his 'alleged abandonment of the

*Trial of  
Warren  
Hastings*

Western values and ethics'.<sup>6</sup> In nineteenth century India, Oriental despotism became a liberal excuse and an alibi for the annexation of any government deemed by the British colonialists not to be responsible to the people.

Henry Steinbach is one of those mid-nineteenth century European authors who contributed in shaping public opinion in Britain, which imagined Punjab under Ranjit Singh as a Sikh despotic government.<sup>7</sup> The authority of his narrative rest on being one of those European mercenaries who had direct experience of living in 'picturesque India' either as a servant of the British East India Company or the Sikh kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.<sup>8</sup> For him, the Sikh rulers of Punjab and Kashmir had proved to be incurably corrupt, incompetent, and rapacious in the exercise of power, resulting in the decline of trade and industry and a mass of peasantry languishing under the arbitrary rule of Oriental despotism. As a Prussian soldier, he was among hundreds of European mercenaries employed by Ranjit Singh to serve Punjab Kingdom from 1835 to 1851.<sup>9</sup>

The book, according to a recent commentator, W.H. McLeod, fell short of literary and academic standards and is in large part 'selections of seldom acknowledged extracts from other men's works, supplemented by a number of anecdotes'.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, in the closing years of the formal annexation of the Sikh Kingdom, the book found a 'receptive market' among the British reading public as it went into a successive second edition in 1847. Despite accusing Henry Steinbach of being an unreliable historian because of using a 'narrow range of sources erratically and without a proper care', and by 'plagiarizing' and committing 'serious errors of fact and omission', and also showing a 'gross bias as far as the Sikhs and Kashmiris are concerned', McLeod considered this work as 'representative' of the period.<sup>11</sup> Not just an account of a disgruntled soldier, a travelogue, or a historian's account, Steinbach's rather insignificant book, according to McLeod, is 'a manual or compendium, seeking to compress within a brief space a comprehensive range of information relating to the Sikh Kingdom'.<sup>12</sup> Steinbach dwelt on popular theories of beliefs in incompetence of 'despotic' rulers, and the 'barbarism' of the people, which were widespread among the European middle classes and the intelligentsia, and were echoed by the British and

other Europeans in India.<sup>13</sup> As part of legitimizing discourses of British civilizing mission in the East, Steinbach's book fed into the travelogues, tales of military adventures, and the Company chronicles, which not only provided raw material for the Orientalists, missionaries, and the administrators, but also shared public opinion expressed through newspapers and popular journals in England.<sup>14</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 1846, three years before the annexation of Punjab, the editors of *Illustrated London News*, while speculating on the future of the British Empire in India like Steinbach, voiced the justification for the colonization of Punjab on the basis of the supposed inability of 'natives' to govern themselves. 'It is the general opinion that Punjab must be annexed to the British territories because they are not material for constructing a permanent native government'. (Emphasis added).<sup>15</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, editors of British weekly considered Punjab to be 'a valuable acquisition' as it possessed 'greater mineral wealth', some of which had already been exploited to finance the defense of colonized territories and fed the British army stationed in Lahore since 1840. However, the editors of the English newspaper felt that 'the physical and natural wealth of the province' can only be turned into commodities 'provided it can be administered' under the British Crown rule, by 'a force of disciplined men'. The editors of the English daily proposed to multiply its agricultural produce by 'a judicious system of irrigation'. The transit trade on the five rivers, 'if subjected to moderate tools, would furnish revenue nearly adequate to the ordinary expense of the government'.<sup>16</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

The suggestion to exploit the abundant natural and physical resources of the province through settled agricultural and scientific management of the riverine network, anticipated large-scale public works projects undertaken by the colonial state in the last quarter of the late nineteenth century Punjab. However, the proposed plans for imperial expansion were threatened by Sikhs who appeared to be an army of religious fanatics and could only be tamed by the gallantry of British army. 'Too large a proportion of the population has been trained to arms for quite to be the result of victory and the Akalees will raise insurrection whenever they are beyond the musket range of sentries'.<sup>17</sup>

British  
economic aspirations  
in the Punjab

### **Ranjit's innovations and the rise of disciplinary order in Punjab**

At the beginning of nineteenth century, when the British East India Company was master of half of India, Punjab was still configured in the Company chronicles 'as the country of Porus, whom Alexander has overthrown'.<sup>18</sup> For any further information for the Company office in Calcutta, 'the archive would have searched in vain for accounts of Punjab more recent than those contained in the words of Strabo and Arrains' the Greek historians in 10 B.C. and 125 A.D., so writes S. Thorbourn, a late nineteenth century colonial civil servant in Punjab Government.<sup>19</sup> In the Euro-centric map of the world, Charles Metcalfe would be the third European to visit Punjab in 1809, following 'Alexander the Great [as] the first European conqueror who set foot in Punjab; the next, after an interval of two thousand years, was Lord Lake'. Not as a warrior or a conqueror but as a part of 'dispatch mission to Persia, Afghanistan, and Punjab, for collecting information about these countries and induce their rulers to cooperate in resisting the impending attack upon their common interests'.<sup>20</sup> The much-feared French invasion of India, which initiated the diplomatic mission, never took place. However, an 'accident' at Amritsar turned the peace keeping mission into an 'object lesson',<sup>21</sup> for the twenty-eight-year-old Raja of Punjab, Ranjit Singh, as 'the impression left upon the Maharaja's mind of the power and effect of discipline was deep and permanent, for he soon after conceded all the British demands'.<sup>22</sup>

On 25 February 1809, when Metcalfe was waiting for a reluctant and cautious Raja's approval of the Company's request for cooperation,<sup>23</sup> a group of Muslims stationed at Amritsar, camp followers of the Company envoy, raised a *Muharram* procession that alarmed the Sikhs at the Golden Temple. The *Akalis* rose in frenzy and rioted the procession. 'A panic ensued, during which the assailants began flourishing their swords and shouting the Sikh war cry'. In self-defense, an escort of the envoy of the East India Company comprising 'two companies of native infantry and sixteen troopers' took positions and fought back. 'Fixing bayonets, the thin line of *disciplined* men charged and scattered the rioters, whilst the troopers circled round, cutting down stragglers'.<sup>24</sup> (Emphasis mine).

Ranjit Singh's timely arrival at the scene pacified the rioters and saved the situation from graduating into a chaos.

Paradoxically, instead of expressing disapproval for 'insult [ing] the Sikhs in their religious capital', which the English feared, Ranjit Singh 'blamed the intolerance of Priests and rejected their demands'.<sup>25</sup> He also extended his apologies to the Company's envoy, Metcalfe, and 'complimented him on the conduct of his sepoys'.<sup>26</sup> A piece of foolhardy daring', S.S Thorbourn, a British civil servant in Punjab later put it, could have cost twenty-three-year old Charles Metcalfe his life or precipitated a war between the Sikh and the British. Instead it became a pedagogic event and an instrument of object lesson for the young Raja. His desire to learn more about the kind of power, which he had witnessed, brought him closer to his new rivals. He became a signatory to a treaty of 'perpetual friendship', with the British that lasted for thirty years until his death in 1839.<sup>27</sup>

Although the 'object lesson' at Amritsar, which the young Raja learnt 'according to the official statement, with admiration, but more probably with secret dismay, the routing of his braves by a handful of Hindustanis, a class about whose nerve and courage he had hitherto been doubtful', instilled in him 'a new-born belief in discipline'. (Emphasis mine). 'By taking in hand the remodeling of his forces' through improved drill and training of troops by European officers, he rose from the position of 'the boy Raja of Lahore' to that of 'Maharaja of Punjab'.<sup>28</sup> In the latter half of his reign, 'having accustomed his wild horsemen to the sight of a drill sergeant, his next step was to extend the new system' to 'the Khalsa-the 'elected' or 'chosen people', as the Sikhs called themselves', for whom 'accustomed to license... the new restraint was irksome' and had not taken 'kindly to Runjit Singh's innovations'.<sup>29</sup> (Emphasis mine).

324  
innovation  
The technique of discipline which made, as Timothy Mitchell argued in his now classic account of colonial Egypt, 'the ponderous warfare of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which ever greater numbers of men were amassed to face each other head on, was now to seem like the foolish clashing of mere crowds'.<sup>30</sup> A new military order was created in nineteenth century through which the troops were drilled into a unified fighting machine, whose parts were in mechanical and geometric coordination with each other. 'Order was a framework of lines and spaces', wrote Mitchell, 'created out of men, in which men could be distributed, maneuvered and confined'.<sup>31</sup>

experts  
With a firm 'determination to mould his people into soldiers on the English pattern', Ranjit Singh swelled his army and administration with 'men of French, Italian, and Dutch extraction, the military waifs from a war exhausted Europe', and changed the entire organization of Khalsa army.<sup>32</sup> In the next half century, the Khalsa army became a much-feared disciplined force on the basis of its strength in tactful maneuvering as well as size of infantry and artillery.<sup>33</sup>

Over the course of nineteenth century India, the 'musket range' of techniques of disciplinary control would extend from the barracks and military hospitals to public offices and schools as the British colonial empire extended its northern frontiers to take into its fold the re-organization of the entire society. The scope of innovations spread from military tactics to changes in the housing pattern, eating habits, food, and clothing of the vast peasant population in remote villages and towns of the colonial Punjab.<sup>34</sup> Modern power not only conquered battlefields and barracks, but through the 'object lessons' in disciplinary power, symbolized by large-scale public works which began right after the annexation, it subdued the entire population in the late nineteenth century Punjab.<sup>35</sup> The speed and efficiency epitomized in the disciplinary order became a hallmark of Britain's colonial authority in Punjab.<sup>36</sup>

disciplinary power  
The conquest of Punjab was not just a result of superior arms, economic wealth or cultural technologies, but equally important was a new mode of power applied 'not as much the body of the sovereign's subject'... as the conditions in which the body is to live and define its life'.<sup>37</sup>

The distinctively modern character of the colonial state gave birth to a wide range of techniques and practices that were designed to shape and mould the mind as well as the body of the colonized in an 'improving' manner.<sup>38</sup> The structure of political and social constraints, what Michel Foucault called as 'disciplinary power' initially located in the institutions of the colonial state began to be circulated among wider sections of population in the late nineteenth century Punjab.<sup>39</sup>

### **Territorial conquest of Punjab kingdom: the advent of British colonialism.**

An Englishman is as uncertain to serve under as a monkey.<sup>40</sup>

The territorial conquest of the British Punjab spread over a

quarter of nineteenth century, exemplifying the *liberal* principles of 'good governance' as charges of the 'native' misgovernment and mismanagement became the rationale for the continued seizure of Indian territories.<sup>41</sup> Lord Dalhousie, the new Governor General of the East India Company who had landed in Calcutta in January 1848 aggressively pursued the policy of deposing 'despotic' rulers and annexing their estates.<sup>42</sup> The liberal reformers of the colonial state in India and England with an agenda of progressive legal and administrative reforms in India had brought mounting evidence to the tyrannical despotism of Indian rulers and ignorance and superstitions of Indian subjects, thus providing a rationale for the British administration in Punjab.<sup>43</sup>

The making of the British Punjab started with the annexation of Delhi and Bhatti territories in 1803, which was the first tract to be conquered [but] was last to be annexed to the province.<sup>44</sup> As part of the North-Western Province, the land was parceled out accordingly partly in life *jagirs* and partly in grants in perpetuity to the 'native' chiefs and others who had assisted the East India Company in quelling local insurgencies.<sup>45</sup> The areas between Sutlej and Jamna, including the Sikh princely states of Patiala, Jind, Nabah, and Lawda, were brought under the protection of the Company.<sup>46</sup> Through the treaty of friendship struck through 'long negotiations' with Ranjit in 1808 and 1809, British were relieved from the steady pressure of Ranjit Singh, who was seen by them to be 'bent on establishing his supremacy over all the followers of Guru Gobind Singh'. By 1849, as a result of 'open disloyalty of some chiefs and the neglect of others to fulfill their obligations', with nine notable exceptions, the rest of the *Rajas* were reduced to the status of *jagirdars* and stripped off their criminal powers, while the obligation of feudal service was committed into money payments, and in due course 'the Cis-Sutlej territory was thus reduced to the condition of an ordinary British possession'.<sup>47</sup>

With final strokes to the impending annexation of Punjab in 1849, as the province looked 'increasingly ripe for plucking' to officials of the East India Company, the new order of the barracks was to extend to Lahore, the capital city of the British Punjab, and to the agricultural plains and 'waste lands' of Punjab. Lord Dalhousie who had already deposed indigenous rulers and annexed their dominion under one excuse or another was eager to

push his policy of annexation to the frontiers of the British Empire, which he had already proclaimed in August 1848. Under pressure from the English manufacturing sector for greater supplies of cotton from the colonies and the precarious financial position of the East India Company,<sup>48</sup> the task of the Company was to create a new political and economic order through the technology of discipline which could transform 'primitive' tribes of Punjab *Doabs*, – unlike Ranjit's unfinished reform agenda to create a fighting machine – into loyal, revenue paying, agricultural subjects of the British colonial state.<sup>49</sup>

In less than ten years after Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, when a war of succession ensued among rival *misl*s of *Akalis* and the British, the Sikh state of child Maharaja Dalip Singh, comprising Jullundhur *Doab*, Kangra, and Hazara was annexed and Lahore was occupied in February 1846.<sup>50</sup> By the terms dictated by English officials in a treaty signed on 9 March 1846, Maharani Jind Kaur, mother of 'the infant Maharaja' was removed from the royal counsel. British resident official, Henry Lawrence who had acquired full authority and control over the administration of Darbar resented the Maharani as a 'female intriguer and woman of loose morals' whose 'reputation was so notorious, her views so incorrigible and her example so pernicious, that the Governor General thought it wrong to leave him [Dalip Singh] with her any longer'.<sup>51</sup> Council of Regency was appointed which was to be controlled by the British residents in Lahore, Henry and John Lawrence. Separated from his mother, the eight-year-old Maharaja 'became a ward' of two brothers 'who were responsible for his protection and education'.<sup>52</sup> (Emphasis mine). Maharaja Dalip was later sent to Nepal and then chose exile in England and fought years of vain legal battles to pursue claims to his royal entitlements.<sup>53</sup>

Under the treaty, 'the Maharaja Dalip Singh ceded all his territories in the *Doab*, between the Beias and Sutlej and the hill countries between the Bias and Indus, including Kashmir and Hazara'. Jammu and Kashmir was given to Gulab Singh for a payment of seventy-five lacs of rupees.<sup>54</sup> The rest of the Sikh state, divided into three districts of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Kangra, was brought under the Commissionership of John Lawrence.<sup>55</sup> The territories in the northwest of Punjab with Multan as capital, reined under the administration of Diwan Mul Raj, were annexed



after the conquest of Multan in 1848-1849.<sup>56</sup> On 21 February 1849, various ranks of the insurgent *Khalsa* army were defeated in a series of battles leading to the final one in Gujrat, providing a perfect excuse for the Company to annex whatever was left of Punjab as the 'Lahore state'. On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1849, the proclamation of annexation was read by Governor General Lord Dalhousie, and 'signed by the young Maharaja and six of the principal Sirdars and people of his court'.<sup>57</sup> On the following day, Lord Dalhousie's dispatch put the provincial government under a Board of Administration (1849-1853)<sup>58</sup> comprising John Lawrence as President, and his brother Henry Lawrence and Charles Greville Ransel as members (to be replaced by Robert Montgomery).<sup>59</sup> The Board was to maintain the internal peace of the province, and to guard the Western Frontier, from the northern border, with the Indian Army manning Peshawar and the northern frontier.

### **'Mai Baap' paternalism in Punjab: British civil servants as oriental despots**

Whenever, they found that contractors came amongst them, bags of rupees in hand, to buy sheep and cattle, grass and wood and *hire* not seize, their camels and bullocks, they made up their mind that, if they must have a master, the *Feringhyee* was preferable to Sikh. As, then, the people of Punjab either welcomed or acquiesced in the new order of things and were willing to give the English a fair trial.<sup>60</sup>

If Charles Metcalfe early career as emissary to the Darbar of Ranjit Singh was instrumental in instructing Ranjit Singh through the 'object lesson' in disciplinary power, his later career as Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Province (NWP), is equally dramatic and forceful. He is credited to be 'one of the founding fathers of the Punjab System' of authoritarian rule and having been its pioneer in the Delhi territory where John Lawrence, future Lieutenant Governor of Punjab and a strong advocate of Punjab school of administration received his training.<sup>61</sup> A manual of revenue rules and procedures, titled as *Directions for Settlement Officers and Collectors*, developed by renowned Indian civil servant and later Lieutenant Governor of the NWP, James Thomason, (1843-1853) was recommended for the guidance of settlement officers in Punjab. Along with the members of the

Board, who were among the 'nineteen of the best Thomason's officers' sent to form the nucleus of the new establishment in Punjab along with their 'native' subordinates.<sup>62</sup> Henry Lawrence, President of the Board, brought many military officers into the provincial administration – they formed almost half of the corps of administrators in the colonial Punjab.<sup>63</sup>

The province of Punjab was divided into seven divisions each comprising three to four districts, headed by a Commissioner and a Deputy Commissioner and with headquarters at Amritsar, Ambala, Jullundur, Leiah, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi, 'amongst them was distributed a staff of about one hundred British civil officers'. Each district was subdivided into three to five *tehsils* under a *tehsildar* or an Assistant Commissioner. The *tehsil* was further subdivided into *zails*, with one *kanungo* and dozens of *patwaris* and headed by a *zaildar*. Each *zail* consisted of a number of villages, headed by a *lambardar*, a village influential. Recognized as natural leaders of the community, both village officers were not only assisted in the revenue collection, but also received a small percentage from the collected revenue.<sup>64</sup>

Being the new non-regulated province in India which was to be ruled for decades without a direct governing apparatus that could penetrate the lowest strata of society, the governance of Punjab required extensive official and personal knowledge of the subjects by the civil administrator that would establish the writ of the Government rather than conformity to the legal rules enforceable through use of force. In contrast to the permanent settlement in Bengal presidency, which was regulated by an Act of the British Parliament, the district headed by a judge, a magistrate, and assisted by a collector whose primary responsibility was revenue collection, Punjab administrators had not only executive powers but also carried magisterial and judicial authority. Although rules for the administration of executive and judicial officers were provided for in the official manuals like *Punjab Civil and Criminal Codes* and *Rules for the Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice*, the personal discretion of the bureaucracy was allowed to prevail over the rules of administration to account for the customary knowledge made available through administration. The colonial state apparatus in Punjab, therefore, developed 'somewhat elaborate systems ...[.] to ascertain nuances of local customs whether in matters of marriage,

inheritance, adoption, testamentary or other dispositions of property, contracts, sale, mortgage, debt, commercial usury, and to create intermediate judicial and administrative strata from within the population itself'.<sup>65</sup>

British accounts of the late nineteenth century Punjab considered the rational exploitation of natural resources as well as coercion of indigenous population into submission as liberal forms of restoring natural law and order in the colonies.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, the official accounts of the colonial administrators were laced with concern for the *welfare* of the population, and presented the colonial state as the *savior* of the population through discipline and regulation. Increasingly, the 'native question', as Mahmood Mamdani put it, of 'how can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority',<sup>67</sup> came to be formulated not in terms of the repression of the rebellious segment of population, but in terms of creating docile bodies through the governmental apparatus of de-centralized administration.

The new mode of power found its expression in the ideas of the nineteenth century utilitarian philosopher and jurist, Jeremy Bentham. His principle of 'personal responsibility, accountability and inspectability' had its applications not only in the military barracks, hospitals and prisons in Punjab but also for civil servants in the British administration who had begun to be recruited through competitive public examinations rather than nominations since 1853.<sup>68</sup> Drawn mostly from Oxford or Cambridge, the new candidates for the Indian civil services, to use Thomas Babington Macaulay's words, had to 'show learning that was thorough rather than what Haileybury spread',<sup>69</sup> which in his critique of Indian administration, he considered it a 'knowledge of a wide surface but small depth'.<sup>70</sup> His endorsement of the 'grueling competitive examination as the *bonafide* of its distinctive policy of seeking the best brains' resonates with social Darwinism of J.S. Mill which poses the competition among species or within species' as a 'stimulus to enlarged intelligence'.<sup>71</sup>

For a British graduate in the late nineteenth century, a career in Britain's imperial service was joining a fraternity of 'young men, worth a thousand a year, dead or alive'. On the death of an Indian Civil Servant, the pension was paid to his widow, and then passed on to his unmarried children. Compared to the salary

structure of mid-Victorian times, the young civil servant's 'starting salary was twice that of the average clergyman likely to be his father'.<sup>72</sup> However, the colonial administrators who governed a large mass of people lived in a pronounced state of exile in their 'provincial homes'. Once dispatched to a province, 'their initial colony was one's home, often right through the retirement'. Every civil servant in Punjab had to undergo compulsory examination in local languages, of his designated colonies, as to facilitate according to the official statement 'that constant and easy intercourse between government officials and the people [which] was essentially for the good government of half civilized races'.<sup>73</sup>

Punjab 'with its pride in 'Punjab Tradition' of administration, a determined amalgam of positive action and *man bap* paternalism (the Lawrence Code of the first article of faith being 'the man who is most ready to use force at the beginning will use least in the end') consistently emerged as the number one choice of the British probationers' in the late nineteenth century Indian civil service.<sup>74</sup>

Under the imperatives of 'non-regulation' as a new form of colonial domination, indirectly through a bureaucracy, the 'Settlement work' by District Officers emerged as one of the principal modalities of construction of colonial knowledge in the late nineteenth century Punjab.<sup>75</sup> As a permanent feature of district administration in Punjab, it initiated a set of processes through which the agrarian structure of the province was incorporated into the imperial economy and transformed into what Hamza Alavi has called the 'colonial mode of production'.<sup>76</sup> The settlement comprised an agreement that was made between the state and the peasantry through which land revenue was assessed and a record of rights to cultivate land was developed to establish the propriety status of the cultivators.<sup>77</sup> The settlement reports also contained detailed information on the social and economic organization of groups and communities as well as local histories and customs to establish *individual* property rights, in contrast to several complex forms of land ownership and tenure arrangements that preceded the British colonial rule.<sup>78</sup> Since the definition of 'custom' and 'tradition' was fundamental to the ownership of land and establishment of revenue systems and legal codes, the periodic settlement reports by the District Officers carried the earliest pieces of anthropological knowledge of Punjab that were authorized and

consumed by the colonial state in Punjab.

Based on principles of centralization of judicial, fiscal, and magisterial powers in the hands of each civil administrator from the highest office of the district, Deputy Commissioner, to the lowest civil functionary in a village like *zaildar*, the colonial state in Punjab had sought control over its subjects like a patriarch over his family. The district officers were vested with administrative and judicial functions without any check by an independent judiciary.<sup>79</sup>

Each district was obedient to the will of one resident Englishman, whom not a score in a thousand of his subjects had ever seen. These seemingly despots, twenty-nine in number were called Deputy Commissioners, and in their hands, under the easy control of distant Commissioners, who again under that of the still more distant Board, were concentrated, in the belief of their subjects, all the power of an earthly providence.<sup>80</sup>

The form of indirect rule employed in the colonial governance of Punjab turned British Indian civil servants into small scale despots, muddling through myriads of customs and practices of diverse cultures to try to create a customary political and economic order. Without judicial authority to check personal discretion of a district officer in the exercise of power and formation of rules of the government, 'each district officer, a little king within his own domain subject to loosely defined limitations, had a free hand in shaping customs as to land tenures'.<sup>81</sup>

For the British observers of the late nineteenth century, 'Punjab, with its thirsty plains, unutilized rivers and willing, manly population, was like a newly discovered country with great natural resources awaiting the development, which English brains, integrity and organizing power alone could give'.<sup>82</sup> In this disciplining mission of the colonial state 'every Deputy Commissioner of a district, every settlement officer, thought himself indispensable to his people and buckled to his task with the enthusiasm of youth and high resolve as if the evolution of order out of the debris of past confusion and misery depended on his individual exertions and governing ability'.<sup>83</sup> The indispensability of alien rule to create a rational order of things is not premised on the logic of cultural differences alone, but on the 'organizing power' of colonial governmentality. It is the ability of an individual district officer to exercise 'towards its inhabitants,

Patnashal  
and the wealth and behavior of all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of the family over his household and his goods', which constituted the distinctive character of modern power of the colonial state in Punjab.<sup>84</sup>

As pastoral form of power aimed at the welfare of each and all, the paternal government of the late nineteenth century Punjab can be understood as a new modality of colonialism whose rationality was anchored in the prosperity of the population, which could only be achieved by an official ethnographic knowledge of the colonized 'reality'. Such knowledge was critical to maintain hegemony of a foreign rule through the creation and administration of colonial law and political economic order. In the words of Sir Denzil Ibbetson, Lieutenant Governor of Punjab and author of first decennial census report of Punjab in 1881, lack of ethnographic knowledge of the colonized world stood in the way of development of science and rational administration. Ibbetson wrote:

'Our ignorance of customs and beliefs of the people among whom we dwell is surely in some respects a reproach to us; for not only does that ignorance deprive European science of material it greatly needs, but it also involves a distinct loss of administrative power to ourselves.'<sup>85</sup>

The statistical profile of the peasant population, from small peasant proprietors to big landlords with various forms of tenure re-arrangements, located the individual ownership, of every single cultivable tract and documented the transfer of land and its extent and direction which was the principal source of agricultural revenue for the government.<sup>86</sup> Far from being a mere record of revenue collection, as Shahid Amin observed, the exhaustive settlement reports were meant to monitor 'progressive integration of Indian agriculture into the national and world economies, assess the increase in revenue that the district could now bear, and evaluate the generally beneficial effects of the British rule on the countryside.'<sup>87</sup> A regime of legal rights culminating in the Land Revenue Act of 1871, which gave legal sanction to the settlement reports by the district settlement officers, also established the legitimacy of the right of the colonial state to appropriate land revenue, forest or natural resources.<sup>88</sup> The customary social and political order was sustained through a system of periodic land

settlements and revenue and cartographic surveys undertaken by the colonial administrators of Punjab, which provided the basis for the development of Punjab Laws Act of 1872 that 'officially' established the primacy of British constructed customary law over other legal systems in the domain of civil jurisprudence. The core of customary law was limited to matters of personal laws in Punjab. After 1900, unlike rest of India, it was extended to include land as well, which legally abolished the customary right of peasantry to alienate its lands in Punjab.<sup>89</sup>

*very* The administrative processes put in place to determine the ownership of land and evaluate revenues culminated in producing settlement reports, and which were regularly produced and published on a district-to-district basis. Through the consolidation of the governmental apparatus, an elaborate system of colonial knowledge production was put in place with an ever increasing complexity and scale, involving hundreds of thousands of educated Indians to enumerate population and ascertain nuances of local customs and practices in marriage, inheritance, adoption and disposition of property.<sup>90</sup> Through the disciplinary apparatus of the colonial state, various technologies of surveillance and control were deployed to construct an 'oriental', 'indigenous', 'customary', 'traditional' body of knowledge and practices that could be codified for colonial governance. In the name of customary order, a regime of discipline-government was instituted to control and regulate the indigenous population, while enhancing production through large scale projects of 'public works' of roads, railways, telegraph and irrigation in the late nineteenth century Punjab.<sup>91</sup>

The ethnographic features of indigenous society of Punjab would take shape in miscellaneous collections, volumes, newspapers, official manuals, and gazetteers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The popular descriptions of Punjab as a Sikh state, with Punjabi as the 'tongue of the Darbar' forming a 'national government' of the Sikhs gave way to the representation of Punjab as a multi-religious society with ethnically diverse populations. ...The evolutionary project of nineteenth century anthropology and ethnology effectively deployed by the colonial state brought mounting evidence on the 'primitive' nature of society in Punjab and provided a historical and theoretical rationale for the 'reformation' of society through disciplinary

institutions of schools, prisons, factories hospitals and bureaucracy. The re-constitution of indigenous population into what Cohn has called 'the manageable categories of European ethnology' would provide suitable grounds for constructing the suitable 'material' for a 'permanent native government' in the colonial Punjab as envisaged in the popular opinion in the late nineteenth century England.<sup>92</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lepel Griffin, *Ranjit Singh* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), p.46.

<sup>2</sup> For a general view on 'Oriental despotism', see, Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (Connecticut, 1957). Also see, Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan* (London, 1770), for the earliest writings on India under the Company rule.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas R. Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.6.

<sup>4</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism* (London: Open University Press, 2002), p.7.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (eds.), *Imperialism and Orientalism: A Documentary Source Book* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp.24-48.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>7</sup> For an account of Sikh Studies, see, W.H. McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs: Autobiography of a Historian* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2004). Also see, G. Khurana, *British Historiography on the Sikh Power in Punjab* (Delhi: Mansell Publisher, 1985), for a survey of British writings on the history of Sikhs.

<sup>8</sup> It was not uncommon for European authors of eighteenth century to write about Indian culture and history solely from published books, and travelogues. Notable among them is English writer, James Mill, author of *History of India*, the first ever-English account of India published in 1817, which was written without ever visiting India.

<sup>9</sup> He commanded an infantry battalion of the Khalsa army and was twice posted in Peshawar in 1838 and in 1841. He failed as a military commander and suffered great personal humiliation at the hands of Khalsa troops under his command, which mutinied due to physical hardships and low salaries. In the later years, he found employment with the new Raja of Kashmir, Gulab Singh, and remained in his service till 1851, when an Indian commander replaced him. He resigned in protest and tried in vain to seek justice in a personal



audience with Viceroy Lord Dalhousie at Simla. Later, he returned to Europe and died *incognito*. See W.H. McLeod, 'Colonel Steinbach and the Sikhs', *Punjab, Past and Present*, ix (1975). Also see, Charles Grey, *European Adventurers of North India, 1785 to 1849* (Lahore, 1929), who gives details of many military officers and adventurers who came to Punjab from war stricken Europe in eighteenth and nineteenth century.

10 See, W.H. McLeod, 'Introduction', *op.cit.* It was overshadowed by more authoritative accounts of that period like J.D. Cunningham's *A History of the Sikhs* (London: N+M. Press, 1849), which 'noticed it briefly to rebuke its author'. *Ibid.*, p. xvii. Also see, J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (London, 1849).

11 See, W. H. McLeod, 'Introduction', Henry Steinbach, *op.cit.*, p.xxx.

12 *Ibid.*, p.xxix.

13 S.S. Bal, 'Character of Ranjit Singh's Kingdom as Seen by the British, *Punjab, Past and Present*, Vol. xxii (1988), pp.1-18.

14 Bernard Cohn, *India, the Social Anthropology of a Civilization* (Oxford: Prentice-Hall, 1971). Also see, Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (eds.), *op.cit.*

15 Paragraph based on Muhammad Ashraf, *Officers of the Punjab Commission* (Lahore: Neda Publishers, 1995), p.16.

16 *Ibid.*, p.10.

17 *Ibid.*, p.11.

18 For a historical and topographic account of the pre-colonial Punjab, See, Indu Banga (ed.), *Agrarian System of the Sikhs: Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978).

19 S.S. Thorburn, *Punjab in Peace and War* (London, Qausain, 1904), pp. 1-2. Also see, S.S. Thorburn, *Musalman and Money Lenders in Punjab* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1886).

20 *Ibid.*, p.5.

21 'Object Lessons' was a pedagogic technique pioneered in the eighteenth century Europe intended to develop human perspective and moral capacities through demonstration of objects. It was developed by Swiss educationist and social reformer Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827), who focused on teaching through observation and direct sensory experience of concrete material objects drawn from nature that exist in 'purer' stage. The techniques were specifically useful to teach 'illiterate' masses throughout the nineteenth century in Europe and North America and widely used for the instruction of uneducated Indian public in schools all over the British Empire. See, John Dieter, *Johann Heirich Pestalozzi and the Pestalozzian Method of Language Teaching* (Bern, 1981), p. 49, cited

148 / in William Glover, Making Lahore Modern: Urban Form and Social Practice in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1920, Ph.D. diss (University of California, 1999).

22 S.S. Thorburn, *op.cit.*, p.9.

23 Victor G. Kiernan, *Metcalf's Mission to Lahore, 1808-1809* (Delhi, 1987), for an official account of the negotiations between the English and the Sikhs.

24 S.S. Thorburn, *op.cit.*, p.9.

25 Victor G. Kiernan, *op.cit.*, p.82.

26 It was Syed Aziz ud Din, Ranjit's Muslim Physician and councilor, who against the will of Sikh sardars 'strongly dissuaded him from such a course'. Ikram Ali Malik (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.101.

27 S.S. Thorburn, *op.cit.*, p.10.

28 *Ibid.*, p.11.

29 *Ibid.* However, underneath the 'Europeanized army' of Ranjit Singh, lay the customary principles of military recruitments and promotions, which led to indiscipline in later years. According to Khushwant Singh, 'although modern methods of training were introduced, the mode of recruitment remained the same. Men were not recruited individually but in batches from the same village and were frequently members of the same family or clan. Thus the senior member of the family or the tribal elder who had introduced the men to the service joined as officer instead of being promoted on merit'. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, 1469-1839, 1 (New Delhi, 1999), p.261.

30 See, Timothy Mitchell, *op.cit.*, p.37. 'The new technique of drill, discipline and command was the first thing upon which an Egyptian commented when describing the French troops that invaded his country in 1798. 'They make signs and signals among themselves,' wrote the historian al-Jabarti, 'that they follow and never deviate from them...The exact discipline and coordination of individuals make it possible to build with them the artificial machine'.

31 *Ibid.*, p.38.

32 *Ibid.*, p.11. Also see, Lepel Griffin, *op.cit.*, pp.144-50.

33 'In one year the infantry was increased from 8,000 to 11,681 (At the time of death of the Maharaja the infantry numbered over 27,000 men). In sixteen years the artillery was increased from 22 guns to 188 guns and 280 swivels; the number of artillerymen in the same period increased six fold (from 800 to more than 4,500). See, 'Europeanisation of the Army', Khushwant Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.258-67.

34 Rajit K. Mazumber, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), for an illuminating study of the social,

political and economic consequences of the creation and existence of the Indian army's deep roots in the rural Punjab.

<sup>35</sup> Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.161.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical construction of British India, 1765-1843* (University of Chicago Press, 1997). 'The imperial significance of the Great Trigonometrical Survey depended in part on the survey's configuration of the British rule of South Asia as being scientific, rational, and liberal, in active opposition to the Asian rule, which it stereotyped as being mystical, irrational and despotic', p.319.

<sup>37</sup> David Scott, 'Colonial Governmentality', *Social Text*, Vol. 43 (1995), pp.191-219.

<sup>38</sup> William G. Staples, *The Culture of Surveillance: Discipline and Social Control in the United States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

<sup>39</sup> Michel Foucault, *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> C.F. Usborne, *Punjabi Lyrics and Proverbs* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1905), p.25.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.4-5.

<sup>42</sup> Lord Dalhousie's policies of annexations, especially the taking of Awadh in 1856, were one of the significant factors that precipitated to, what has been called in Indian history as the 'War of Independence' of 1857. See, Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Histriography of India: A Nineteenth Century Agenda and Implications* (Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> See, Michael H. Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India, 1757-1857* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> James M. Douie, *The Settlement Manual with Notes* (Lahore: Government Printing Punjab, 1915), p.5.

<sup>45</sup> For an account of early colonial intelligence of Punjab Kingdom, see, G. Carmichael Smyth, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore, With Some Accounts of the Jummoo Rajahs, the Seik Soldiers and their Sardars* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1996).

<sup>46</sup> Aneeta Rani, 'Some Aspects of Agrarian Structure of Punjab during the Eighteenth Century', *Panjab, Past and Present*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1986).

<sup>47</sup> James M. Douie, *op.cit.*, pp.6-7.

<sup>48</sup> Dolores Domino, "Some Aspects of British Land Policy in Punjab after its Annexation in 1849", *Panjab, Past and Present*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1986), p.13.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Fox, *Lions of Punjab: Culture in Making* (Berkley, 1985).

- 50 Harminder Kaur Sohal, 'Indian Historical Writing on Decline and Fall of the Lahore Kingdom', *Panjab, Past and Present*, Vol. 29 (1995).  
51 *Ibid.*, p.206.
- 52 Harold Lee, *Brothers in the Raj: The Lives of John and Henry Lawrence* (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.199.
- 53 'The young Maharaja Duleep Singh was brought to England to live in exile, where after a prolonged struggle with the Government he decided to furnish information and documents in the form of a private publication', See, *Annexation of Punjab*, *op.cit.*, p.i. Originally titled *Holocaust of the Sikh Raj: the Maharajah and his Government*, the book appeared in Britain in June 1884 according to the foreword to the reprint.
- 54 James M. Douie, *op.cit.*, p.7. Initially, Gulab Singh was granted Hazara with Kashmir. However, 'the next year, he induced the Lahore Darbar to take over Hazara and to give him in exchange the territory near Jammu'.
- 55 R.R. Sethi, *John Lawrence as Commissioner of the Jullundur Doab, 1846-1849* (Lahore: Punjab Govt. Record, 1930). Also see, Harold Lee, *op.cit.*
- 56 Royal Roseberry, *Imperial Rule in Punjab: the Conquest and Administration of Multan, 1818-1881* (New Delhi: Riverdale Co., 1987).
- 57 Anonymous, *Annexation of Punjab* (Lahore, 1998), p.137.
- 58 For detailed studies on the working of Board of Administration in Punjab, see, N.M. Khilnani, *British Power in Punjab, 1839-1958* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1972).
- 59 The Board was abolished in February 1853 and power was vested in a Chief Commissioner, under whom the principal administration officers were Judicial Commissioner and Financial Commissioner. Later Chief Commissioner, John Lawrence was made Lieutenant Governor of Punjab in 1859. See, Muhammad Ashraf, *op.cit.*
- 60 S.S. Thorburn, *op.cit.*
- 61 Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarian and India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 62 James M. Douie, *op.cit.*, p.9. Also see, Harold Lee, *op.cit.*
- 63 Anthony Kirk-Greene, *op.cit.*, p.89. 'The Lawrences are one of the first and most famous families to make the service of India into a tradition. Alexander, Henry's father, had worked in India and three of his five sons followed in his footsteps: George, Henry and John'. Also see, Jean Fairley, *The Lion River: the Indus* (London: John Day Co., 1975), p.192.

<sup>64</sup> Mustapha Kamal Pasha, *Colonial Political Economy: Recruitment and Underdevelopment in Punjab* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.162.

<sup>65</sup> Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility* (London: Atlantic Highlands, 1995), p.64.

<sup>66</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, 'Liberalism and Colonialism: A Critique of Locke and Mill', Jan Naderveen Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh (eds.), *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power* (Delhi, 1997).

<sup>67</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: 1996), p.16.

<sup>68</sup> Anthony Kirk-Greene, *op.cit.*, pp.87-24, for the origin, recruitment, training, and performance of the Indian Civil Service, 1858 to 1947.

<sup>69</sup> See, L.S. Milford, *Haileybury College, Past and Present* (London: Leipric, T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), the first college set up by the East India Company for training its civil servants. Also see, Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travelers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (New Delhi, 2004), pp.103-36, on the working of the Haileybury College.

<sup>70</sup> 'The civil service in Britain 'upto 1830s hardly merited either the terms 'civil' or 'service'. The older, custom based tradition incorporated several forms of official appointment, including inheritance, apprenticeship, and the exertion of local influence. In many cases, government positions did not carry a salary; appointees instead extracted their livelihood by deducing a percentage from the collected revenue. The customary authority of these positions devolved straight from the Crown. With the increased influence of business and middle classes in the Parliament, it was inevitable that this archaic structure was seen as repository of 'jobbery' and sinecure ship in public life. Thus in Britain we have the 'the century of Northcote-Trevelyan' after Charles Trevelyan and Staffordshire Northcote, both old India-hands and members of the Board of Trade, who were commissioned by the Parliament to report on the re-organization of the permanent civil service in 1854'. See, Arindam Dutta, *op.cit.*, pp.68-9.

<sup>71</sup> Anthony Kirk-Greene, *op.cit.*, p.93. Also see, Charles Allen (ed.), *Plain Tales from the Raj: The Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

<sup>72</sup> Paragraph based on Anthony Kirk-Greene, *op.cit.*, p.109. Also see, K.L. Panjabi, *The Civil Servants in India* (Bombay, 1965).

<sup>73</sup> Nazir Ahmad, *Development of Urdu as Official Language of Punjab, 1849-1974* (Lahore: Punjab Govt. Office, 1977), p.24.

<sup>74</sup> Anthony Kirk-Greene, *op.cit.*, p.105.

<sup>75</sup> The district officers had to perform a bewildering variety of duties in administering the province. According to the India Office List of duties in 1920, which had only increased over the past decades: 'His title by no means exhausts his multifarious duties. He does in his smaller local sphere all that Home Secretary superintends in England, and a great deal more; for he is the representative of a paternal, and not a constitutional government. Police, jails, education, municipalities, roads, sanitation, dispensaries, the local taxation, and the imperial revenues of his district, are to him matters of daily concern. He is expected to make himself acquainted with every phase of the social life of the Indians, and with each natural aspect of the country. He should be a lawyer, an accountant, a surveyor, and a ready writer of state papers. He ought also to possess no mean knowledge of agriculture, political economy, and engineering.' Anthony Kirk-Greene, *op.cit.*, p.111 (Emphasis mine). Also see, Y.D. Gundevia, *In the Districts of the Raj* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1992), which offers first hand account of an Indian district officer during the closing decades of the British rule in the twentieth century India.

<sup>76</sup> Hamza Alavi, 'Colonialism and the Rise of Capitalism', *Writings of Hamza Alavi*, published online November 2005 (<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/sangat.HAMZA.htm>). Alavi analyses the process by which the colonial regime transformed the structure of the rural society in India. He argued that it was a conscious and express policy of the colonial regime to take the landlord class, as it's principal local allies. It was that 'alliance' between the colonial state and the Indian landlord class that made possible the sustained colonial rule and exploitation of India, which in turn underpinned the development in the metropolis itself. A colonial mode of production was established in India.

S.S. Thorburn, *op.cit.*, p.164.

For an in-depth empirical study of medieval India land and revenue administration and social structure, see, Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) (First pub. 1963) and Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *Agrarian India between the World Wars: A Study of Colonial Feudal Capitalism* (Moscow, 1981).

<sup>79</sup> Pawan Kumar Singla, 'Judicial Administration in Punjab from 1849-1897', *Punjab, Past and Present*, xxvii (1985), pp.56-60.

<sup>80</sup> S.S. Thorburn, *op.cit.*, p.164.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.165. In a bid to impose a new social and cultural order in Punjab, Thorburn's recollection of the early days of development of

the colonial state, the pre-colonial society was assumed to be lacking any stable political and social system, a *tabula rasa* upon which colonial state inscribed its mark.... 'Hence practices were in a such a fluid state that the customary law, as now crystallized by many judicial decisions, was shaped and fixed in its present form in accordance with the views of right and expediency of their earliest Deputy Commissioners and settlement offices. In the making of the laws generally, for which the Board was responsible, the province was fortunate in the fact that no professional lawyer had a share'. However, as Eric Stokes points out that the rules of conduct for the British civil servants in the colonial Punjab were framed through 'Punjab Civil and Criminal Code' and the 'Rules for the Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice' only by the closing decades of the nineteenth century, p.246.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> S.S. Thorburn, *op.cit.*, pp.161-2.

<sup>84</sup> Michel Foucault, *op.cit.*, p.65.

<sup>85</sup> Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes* (Lahore: Govt. Printing Punjab, 1916), p.v.

<sup>86</sup> B.S. Hira, 'The Proprietors and Tenants in the Upper Bari Doab, 1849-1947', *Punjab, Past and Present*, xxix (1995), pp.136-42.

<sup>87</sup> Shahid Amin (ed.), William Crooke, *A Glossary of North Indian Peasant Life* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. xxvi.

<sup>88</sup> Kamlesh Mohan, *op.cit.*, pp.192-203. However, as farmers' discontentment in the later years amply demonstrated in response to rising agrarian indebtedness and famines, these settlement reports, mainly intended to assess the revenue paying capacities of the land and the cultivator vis-à-vis, supply of water, until the 1870s 'were neither complete nor beyond suspicion'. Only in the last two decades 'did there begin to come from the pens of Settlement Officers a steady stream of assessment reports with local statistics of more certain value. By the end of the century, these assessment reports covered large parts of Punjab in considerable detail'.

<sup>89</sup> P.H.M. Van Den Dungen, *op.cit.*

<sup>90</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>91</sup> Gyan Prakash, *op.cit.*

<sup>92</sup> Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

# Pakistan's Intellectual Discourse on the Events of 1971: Apathy, Blames, and Remorse, but not much Objective and Critical Analysis

Syed Jaffar Ahmed

## Introduction

The separation of East Pakistan or the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 constitutes, the biggest setback the country suffered since her emergence on the world map in 1947. In terms of human costs the 1971 crisis was no less destructive than the partition of India as it involved the death and destruction coupled with massive dislocation of millions of people. This human tragedy apart, the breakup of Pakistan posed a number of more serious questions as regards its origin, nationhood and failure in ensuring national integration as well as the role of religion in harmonizing culturally and linguistically diverse people. It would, therefore, be interesting to assess how Pakistan, its governments, civil society, politicians and the public at large responded to these questions. The literature produced by Pakistanis about 1971 events is by no means scarce, but the present study seeks to show that these responses fell far short of being adequate, not to speak of presenting a rational explanation. At the popular level, the overall sentiment is that of a loss incurred, above all, due to role of certain military and political leaders and the hostile role of neighbouring India. This massive sense of loss and humiliation is overwhelmingly reflected in the plethora of articles which the Pakistani newspapers, especially in the Urdu medium, routinely publish on 16 December, the day eastern Pakistani military command under Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi surrendered to Lieutenant General J.S. Aurora in Dhaka. These articles, usually done off the cuff, tend to reinforce the East Pakistani separation/secession paradigm the nation, by and large, has addicted itself to since Pakistan's traumatic dismemberment. This apart, a good number of books have also been published during the past four decades. Some periodicals have also published voluminous special issues which form a significant part of the literature on the subject. The books, both in

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English and Urdu, are of a diverse nature though. They include journalistic accounts, memoirs, and academic texts, besides historical and socio-political analyses. Additionally, the government publications tend to provide the official version. More important among them are the White Paper<sup>(1)</sup> and the Hamoodur Rehman Commission Report<sup>(2)</sup>

What is important to note here is that the major part of the Pakistani-oriented literature on 1971 tends to be overwhelmingly emotional and inexplicably superficial. It tries to find scapegoats, accusing one leader or another for the debacle, or the external powers and the international environment. Indeed, rarely does one find an author focusing on the historical roots of the events of 1971. Likewise, except for a few writers, the socio-economic disparities between the East and West Pakistan, the role of the successive governments, the repressive measures taken by the centralized regimes and, above all, the exploitative and colonizing nature of the post-colonial Pakistani state have seldom received the attention of most of the authors. Above all, a severe lack of a theoretical framework is a common feature of all the efforts except for only a few. Moreover, of the books, those in English are generally more analytical whereas those in Urdu are largely impressionistic, emotional and superficial.

Inexplicably though, the 1971 events get scarce space in the syllabi and the courses taught in Pakistan in schools and colleges. The curriculum-planners in the education ministry have, perhaps, deliberately tried to keep the younger generations ignorant about the failures of the past regimes to work and plan for a better future for Pakistan. This, in part, reflects the amnesia, a state of denial and the seamy side of the state-projected skewed nationalist historiography which is essentially selective and partisan.

In the light of the discussion above, it is more than evident that Pakistan's intellectual/academic discourse on the 1971 events needs to be more objective and rational, if only, for avoiding crisis of a similar nature in future as well as for building a truly democratic state and society. It is also a must for harmonizing inter-state relations in South Asia, particularly between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

## Background

non-narrative  
Since 1971, a good deal has been written in Pakistan on the 1971 events, and the background to the unraveling of these events. In fact, this has been a major theme of writings in the country. Every year, on 16 December, the day Pakistani forces surrendered in former East Pakistan, newspapers publish special articles or editions, carrying pieces related to what is variously designated as 'the 1971 tragedy', 'the great debacle', 'separation of East Pakistan', or, the 'dismemberment of Pakistan'. Seminars are also held across the country, and on the subsequent days their reports get ample coverage in the newspapers. A good many writers have also focused a good deal attention on the 1971 events. Such writings include memoirs as well as analyses of all types of works in various genres—biased, one-sided, ill-informed, balanced, objective, etc. Difficult as it is to make an assessment of them all, a modest attempt can be made to cover a significant part of this literature or at least a part of it which can help understand the major trends. Our selection is, however, characterized by certain limitations which are as follows.

The creative writings have not been included in this survey but memoirs written by individuals with some literary background have not been excluded, if only because these accounts refer to the events in a more general way rather than with the primary objective of producing creative pieces. Since 1971, as in the years prior to it, Pakistan lacked severely in as far as the right of expression and the freedom to write and speak were concerned. Academic freedom in the educational institutions had also suffered due to the successive governments' policies to curb and limit independent thinking and critical inquiry. As an indication of the successive governments' and educational planners' attitude towards objective and critical thinking one can cite the example of how the events of 1971 which in fact form the most critical and decisive events of Pakistan's history, have been treated by them. A survey of the syllabi of History, Civics, Social Studies, Pakistan Studies, being taught in 2000 in Pakistani schools and colleges, revealed that except for one book taught in B.Ed., there was no reference of the separation of East Pakistan in these courses.<sup>3</sup> That means, the East Pakistan crisis and the dismemberment of the country were totally blacked out. What could have been the

intention of the planners of the courses in doing so except for hiding the truth from the new generation? Constructing a nationhood through forgetting the most important but embarrassing aspect of the history may only bring to the fore a nation that would not have learnt from past mistakes.

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*document*  
It is only in the last ten to fifteen years that the Pakistani media have been able to earn for it freedoms which are so important and essential for the free flow of information. Likewise, the academia has also had a relatively free environment in which the scholars and researchers can not only do objective researches but also have them published provided they are not beleaguered by their own inhibitions and self-imposed censorship, and provided they are in a position to neatly identify the limits beyond which they should not tread. Given the nature of the Pakistani state, which has progressively subjected itself to a national security syndrome, it is difficult for the intelligentsia both in the academia as well as outside it, to take liberty to venture on to the national security turf as freely as they would like to. Not only for current affairs analyses, but also for historical studies, these limitations hold. Despite this, if some good and objective writings are found in the overall 1971 literature, it certainly goes to the credit of those who have been able to withstand pressures.

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The bulk of writings available on 1971 can be classified into three major categories: (1) publications covering documents of historical importance; (2) the memoirs and narratives of the individuals who had any significant role during the crisis of 1971, and also of those who witnessed the events of 1971 as an individual citizen or visited Bangladesh and wrote their travelogues in which they recalled the events of 1971; and (3) the analytical books, which treat the events and interpret them in various degrees ranging from being mere biased and one-sided to being highly objective. Here one would like to refer to some of these.

### Documents

During the last four decades, the Government of Pakistan has come out with two major documents on the crisis of East Pakistan which finally eventuated in the creation of Bangladesh. The first one, the *White Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan*,<sup>4</sup> published before



genuine or not, and how and from where the Indian press got hold of the parts of the Report, the government in Pakistan, in 2001, decided to declassify a major portion of the Report. Of the four volumes the Report comprised, the first volume was declassified while the rest dealing with the staff studies, written statements submitted to the Commission, and the witnesses' accounts were kept classified.

The classified volume, by itself, comprises 550 large size pages. It covers a number of themes including the political background of the 1971 events, international relations and their impact on the events, the military aspect of Pakistan's defeat, and the detailed assessment of the surrender. The Report is full of information and tells a good deal about the mishandling of 1970-71 crisis by the Yahya regime, the internal weaknesses of the military institution, the skewed political decisions, and faltering miscalculations about the role and interests of the super powers. The Commission was mainly concerned with the military defeat; hence, it delved into its details. Its recommendations as well confined themselves to the trials of military officials and enquiries into military personnel's misconduct and alleged irregularities. It is interesting that by the time Report was made public, most of these individuals had died and those who were alive were simply ignored. It was only General Niazi who had already been penalized but only to the extent that he was retired after he returned to Pakistan. It is believed in Pakistan that Bhutto decided against making the Report public because he thought that it would annoy the military establishment, leading to friction between him and the military. He also apprehended that the Opposition would demand the exposure of his own role in the East Pakistan crisis.

During the last decade or so, declassified documents of the United States of America<sup>8</sup> and the UK<sup>9</sup> pertaining to that period have also been compiled and printed in book form. They provide quite useful information about these countries' policies and perceptions many of which were not specifically known in those days when they were pursued. They reveal in more specific terms why the United States and the UK did what they actually did when the conflagration was enveloping the subcontinent. Given Pakistan's overwhelming dependence on the US, one could think that the Nixon administration could perhaps exert pressure to

prevent the military junta in Pakistan from taking recourse to a military operation in East Pakistan for the resolution of an essentially political problem. But this the Nixon administration did not, and this is partially explained by reading through the American official documents which on the one hand shed light on the internal divisions of the administration and on the other, the particular American geopolitical interests in the region.

A number of Pakistani writers have also collected and compiled relevant documents on the East Pakistan crisis. Ahmed Salim, a prolific writer, has produced a number of books on former East Pakistan. One of his compiled books<sup>10</sup> focuses the ten fateful days between 15 and 25 March 1971, during which the dialogue between Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto took different turns, and finally broke down. Salim has collected writings and statements of various parties to give their points of view and their version of the events. From the Awami League he covers the versions of Tajuddin Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hussain, and Rehman Subhan. PPP's position has been delineated through the writings of Bhutto and Abdul Hafeez Kardar, while the Government of Pakistan's position from the White Paper referred to above. Yahya Khan's version is based on his statements submitted to the Hamoodur Rehman Commission and the Lahore High Court. The book also includes the statements given by some political leaders—Wali Khan, Mufti Mahmood, and Sardar Shaukat Hayat—before the Commission. Books like these help understand the diverse positions and perceptions which had affected the events of 1971 in different degrees.

### **Memoirs and personal accounts**

A major part of the literature produced in Pakistan on 1971 falls in the category of memoirs or analyses written by those who were then at the helm of affairs. Understandably, these analyses also draw heavily on such writers' personal memoirs. Such writings can further be classified into those which were written by people directly involved in the crisis, and those who, though not the main actors, yet had something significant to share while recalling 1971. Among the (first) category, one may include the writings or collection of scattered statements, etc. of Bhutto, Yahya Khan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and others. Bhutto's position appeared in

his *The Great Tragedy*<sup>(11)</sup>, which was also published in Urdu as *Azeem Almiy*<sup>(12)</sup>. Bhutto goes at length to explain his stand during the fateful dialogues between him and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the one hand and Yahya Khan on the other, after the December 1970 general elections. He seeks to absolve himself of any role in the breakdown of dialogue let alone the events which led to the dismemberment of the country. He also asserts that he was only trying to pursue a political formula which would ensure the survival of Pakistan as a viable federal state.

General Yahya Khan was never able to pen down his account of 1971 even though he lived till 1980. Apart from the two statements referred to above, he gave a few interviews after Bhutto's fall, but in these interviews, he was more focused on charging Bhutto for having misled him. He also failed to explain his own role in the whole tenure of his rule as well as the role of the institution which served as his constituency. In the absence of Yahya Khan's own detailed version, a few writers have attempted to fill the gap. One journalist has come out with a full-length book on Yahya Khan in Urdu<sup>(3)</sup>. He tries to do the undoable and seeks to defend his subject where it is simply impossible to do so. This writer, Munir Ahmed, does not base his book on published sources or even the sources which he could possibly mention. Instead, the book is simply a narrative of the author who seems to have gathered information from different people with the sole objective to provide justification for whatever Yahya did. He thinks that General Yahya Khan was a victim of a conspiracy hatched by various forces, both internal and external. At the fag end, the book features the interview of Yahya Khan's son who abuses Bhutto time and again and projects his father (whose excessive drinking and womanization have been endorsed by the author himself, though with the qualification that Yahya alone should not be blamed for these as these have been the common traits of the Pakistani elite) as quite an innocent figure who died on 8 August 1980 which happened to be the 27<sup>th</sup> of Ramdhan, believed by the Muslims to be the holiest night of the year.<sup>14</sup>

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's version of 1971 never appeared in Pakistan in detail. His writings and statements published in Bangladesh were never available for the Pakistani readers. As a result of this, students of history and general political readers have

always remained curious to know what his views would have been about the developments after the 1970 elections. However, certain writers tried to gather his statements and other relevant material to reconstruct his version. Ahmed Salim's one book<sup>15</sup> carried seven interviews of Sheikh Mujib; three of them were taken prior to 1971, by Pakistani journalists; four interviews were given after 1971. Of these four, three were given to foreign journalists, while one was given to a Pakistani reporter. The book also includes one speech delivered by Mujib on 11 August 1969, at a reception of Sindh Muttahida Mahaz. These interviews though taken at different times suggest that Mujib was pressured to take to a separatist position by the intransigence of Pakistan's ruling elite and the civil-military establishment. Another book<sup>16</sup> by the same author gives a relatively detailed account of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's nine months in jail in Pakistan. Based on Shaikh Mujib's statements and interviews after his release, the book provides the ensemble of the circumstances Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was forced to undergo.

The genre of memoirs seems to be more popular with the retired generals and civil servants in Pakistan. Many of the senior military officers and bureaucrats, who had any role to play in the events of 1971, have particularly chosen to write their impressions. Perhaps, most important of such retired military officers is Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, who led Pakistan's military in the war in East Pakistan and had to surrender only a day after he had boasted that the Indian forces would enter Dhaka only over his dead body. Niazi wrote a full length book, curiously titled, *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*.<sup>17</sup> Niazi holds that it was the failure of the political leadership which compelled the army to face humiliation whereas his own role was above any suspicion. Niazi's analysis of the situation in East Pakistan, the demands of the Bengalis, and the issue of economic disparity between the eastern and the western wings of the country show no depth or understanding of these matters. He is quite biased and at places does not hide his racist feelings against the Bengalis. He also reproduces some of his confidential orders sent to different commands of the divisions deployed in various areas. In one such confidential communication, he says: 'Of late, there have been reports of rape and even the West Pakistanis are not been spared; on 12 Apr. two



West Pakistani women were raped and an attempt was made on two others. There is talk that looted material has been sent to West Pakistan through returning families.<sup>18</sup> After returning to Pakistan from India, Niazi was tried to be made a hero by Bhutto's opponents particularly the right wing and the religio-political parties who wanted to make use of him in order to denounce Bhutto. He was also provided political platform of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) a nine-party front that contested the 1977 elections against Bhutto. Niazi was given publicity by the right-wing media and the books were also published projecting his point of view. Two books with two quite opposite titles were produced. Waseem Sheikh's *Hathiar Kiyon Dalay?*<sup>19</sup> (Why we surrendered?), and Javed Ahmad Siddiqi's *Main nay Hathiar Naheen Dalay*<sup>20</sup> (I did not surrender).

Another important military officer, who was in a key position in East Pakistan in its final days and who penned down his memoirs was Maj-Gen. Rao Farman Ali who served in the Governor's Secretariat. Regarded as one of the most influential generals in those days, Rao Farman Ali played a pivotal role during the 1970-71 crisis. In his *How Pakistan Got Divided?*<sup>21</sup>, he accepts the failures of Pakistan's past governments in addressing the grievances of the East Pakistanis. He shows how due to these grievances the political culture of East Bengal which had earlier supported the creation of Pakistan whole-heartedly, changed radically and how the Pakistani government did little to satisfy the alienated segments of the Bengali society. He defends a number of decisions taken by the military regime and also shows that Mujib was not all that rigid in his dialogue with the Yahya regime. Rao Farman thinks that the hard-headed elements within the Awami League and military's hawks, however, would not let the constitutional parleys succeed. He puts the major responsibility for the dismemberment of Pakistan on India, accusing New Delhi of, seeking to exploit the explosive situation in East Pakistan to its advantage. He also narrates the experiences of his stay in India as a POW. Ali blames the politicians for their role in the dismemberment of the country. In particular, he targets Bhutto, asserting that his boycott of the Assembly session planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> March was a decisive blow to the constitutional parleys being underway in Dhaka. He quotes Bhutto as saying that: 'A National

Assembly meeting in Dacca would be a slaughter house'. Responding to him Mujib said, 'If Dacca would be a slaughter house for Bhutto then West Pakistan would most certainly be the same for him. He finally decided not to go to West Pakistan to meet the President<sup>(22)</sup>

Lt. Gen. Gul Hassan Khan was appointed Chief of Army Staff by Bhutto after he took over as president of the country on 20 December, 1971, but was removed quite unceremoniously, barely three months later. He served as the Chief of General Staff during the 1971 war, and is believed to have forced Yahya Khan and his military junta to relinquish power in favour of Bhutto. In this endeavour he was supported by the Commander-in-Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Rahim Khan. Gul Hassan wrote his memoirs<sup>(23)</sup> covering his whole military career and devoted a large part of it to the 1971 events. He describes in detail the internal weaknesses of the military establishment and its mismanagement of the crisis. To him, the defeat in December 1971 was inevitable, given the machinations of the politicians and the long standing issues accumulated by the successive regimes. At least after the breakup of the country, a retired general was able to realize and observe that:

The responsibility for this tragedy rests with both the politicians and the military, more so the latter, who failed to call a spade a spade, and instead adopted a Nelsonian approach and refused to recognize the obvious – that soldiering and administering the country are just not compatible. Nevertheless, not all the compulsions and constraints emanating from the external environment can absolve the ruling hierarchy of the army of the colossal blunders committed within its own sphere. I attribute these to flaws in character from which maturity and incompetence flowed. I wish to remind the reader that I was very much a part of this drama, and I am open to censure like the other performers<sup>(24)</sup>

Brigadier (Retd.) Abdul Rahman Siddiqi served as the Chief of the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in Pakistan Army. He kept a diary during the 1970-71 on the basis of which he wrote his memoirs<sup>(25)</sup> Siddiqi holds that the East Pakistan tragedy was more

than a military failure. To him it was the collapse of civil society in West Pakistan. In order to corroborate his position, he argues that throughout the nine long months when the military operation was underway in East Pakistan, the civil society in West Pakistan, the public and the political leadership remained inextricably silent. Thus, the military could not be stopped from taking to the suicidal course, which led to the breakup of the country. Siddiqi simply failed to realize that civil society was never allowed to take roots, let alone flourish in Pakistan. Yahya Khan was the second military ruler of the country, and the overall period of military rule covering the three years of Yahya Khan and the ten and a half years of his predecessor, Ayub Khan, together made more than half of the country's history till 1971. Even the first decade of the country was also not free from the influence military exercised in the affairs of the state. This prolonged military dominance obviously deprived the country of a genuine political process, constitutional governance, institutional building, a free press and all other attributes of a democratic culture. Despite this, there arose voices of dissent in West Pakistan against Yahya regime's military operation but these were quelled brutally.

Also worth a mention are four other books of senior military officers. Major General Hakeem Arshad Qureshi commanded an infantry battalion in East Pakistan (Saidpur-Rangpur-Dinajpur) and led it through the 1971 war. He also became a POW. In his memoirs<sup>26</sup> he narrates his experience of the traumatic days and discusses in detail the operational plans pursued by the Pakistan Army. He also highlights the weaknesses and flaws in the military's strategy in handling the situation and suggests a number of measures which could make the military's performance better. He holds that merit should be the sole criterion for promotions, that privileges are discouraged, and the state-of-art techniques be adopted in order to make the military a really professional institution. Regarding the 1971 war which, to him, was a political, diplomatic, and military catastrophe, he holds that the 'centrifugal forces are active in different parts of this unfortunate land. Concentration of power in the hands of a few, to the exclusion of the majority, has triggered alarm bells in sensitive areas. It is necessary that the bitter experience of the loss of East Pakistan and the circumstances leading to it are dissected

dispassionately and corrective measures initiated in the right direction to harness the dangerous trends currently gaining ground.<sup>27</sup>

General K.M. Arif penned down his *Khaki Shadows*<sup>28</sup> after his retirement in 1987. Though he came to limelight during the General Zia-ul-Haq regime in which he served as the Vice Chief of Army Staff, and was the *de facto* commander of the Pakistan Army until his retirement, his memoirs contain a chapter on the 1971 war. Like many other Pakistani writers he chooses the phrase 'debacle' for what happened in 1971. He recommends the identification of the 'individuals who [had] failed and [had] betrayed the country during the tumultuous period'.<sup>29</sup> While determining the causes of the separation of East Pakistan he refers to the 'alienation that affected the Bengali mind soon after 1947'. This alienation was caused due to 'many factors including the backwardness of the areas: gross shortage of trained manpower; and the cultural domination of society by the Hindu population. The post-independence era witnessed administrative follies committed by the centre, [which] created the impression that the Eastern wing was being denied even-handed treatment. The devious role played by India in Pakistan's internal affairs contributed in fomenting trouble in the province'.<sup>30</sup>

Air Marshal Zafar Chaudhry also writes about 'The 1971 Debacle'. Chaudhry served as the Chief of Air Staff, during Bhutto's time. In his memoirs<sup>31</sup> he devotes a chapter on the 1971 events. He takes quite a balanced position as on reflection he thinks that 'The military action against the Awami League in East Pakistan in March 1971 was a most unfortunate political decision, with very sad and tragic consequences. Apart from the massive human tragedy that this step entailed, it should have been fairly clear that an attempt to solve a political problem with the force of arms could not have succeeded'.<sup>32</sup> He also highlights the strategic and operational mistakes committed by the military during the war. But, above all, Chaudhry reflects upon 1971 as a political failure presided over by a military regime, which to him could not do otherwise.

Among the memoirs of the military men the one by Siddiq Salik cannot be ignored as it was perhaps one of the first to be published.<sup>33</sup> Salik witnessed the fall of Dhaka and later

experienced imprisonment in India. He was close to the military high command in East Pakistan and the book is an account of what transpired in the Governor House and within the circle of military commanders. Salik gives details of the political crisis as also the civil war that preceded the war. He laments the role of General Niazi who, to him, remained casual and carefree all along. Salik's book has been translated into Urdu<sup>(34)</sup> and has been regularly quoted by other authors.

The book by Major (Retd.) S.G. Jilani,<sup>(35)</sup> is an account of East Pakistan's fifteen governors, with whom he served as ADC. Of these the last three were appointed during the time of General Yahya Khan. The first one among them was Maj. Gen. Muzafaruddin who was also designated as Deputy Martial Law administrator of East Pakistan. He was replaced by Vice Admiral S.M. Ahsan who gave way to Lt. Gen Tikka Khan. As these were the years of heightened political activities, how the Governor House looked at events around it and the details of the context between the political class and the successive military men occupying the Governor House have been brought to limelight by Jilani. A number of anecdotes and incidents of importance may be taken account of by reading the book which, though, is not as detailed and exhaustive as the accounts of Siddiq Salik.

Here it would be in order to refer to a few other memoirs written by the civilians. Jilani BA,<sup>(36)</sup> affiliated with the Jamat-e-Islami, as well as another Jamat leader and writer, Syed Asad Gilani<sup>(37)</sup> hold the separation of East Pakistan as a great tragedy of Muslim history. Jilani writes about his own association with East Pakistan, his organizational activities there, his visit to East Pakistan during the 1970-71 crisis period, etc. He thinks that the Bengali people were severely misled by the Awami League leadership and the media, as also by the Hindus living in East Pakistan. Almost similar is Gilani's perception. Both of them take an extremely partisan view of East Pakistan's situation. Both regard Bengali nationalism as un-Islamic, designed to damage Islamic identity. Gilani quotes his mentor and religio-political ideologue, Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi, saying that Pakistan could be kept united only through the bond of Islam, and that the Muslims could never be kept united on the basis of language or territorial nationhood. One of the concluding sections of Gilani's book is titled 'Noha'

(elegy), which is a letter addressed to a Bengali friend and lecturer, Farogh Ahmed. Therein Gilani laments that the Muslim Bengal was swept by the *Jahili Qaumiyyat* (ignorant nationalism).

Khawaja Iftikhar was a writer and journalist who also took part in politics before and after 1947. His book<sup>38</sup> falls in the category of a memoir in the sense that he gives his personal impressions about the individuals he has chosen to include in his book. The bias of his book is apparent from its very title which reads, *Das Phool Aik Kanta* (Ten Flowers, One Thorn). Here the ten flowers are Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Nazimuddin, Suhrawardy, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot, Mian Abdul Bari, Hameed Nizami, Shorish Kashmiri, and Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain, while the thorn is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The author's position is quite 'simple'. To him, while the ten leaders played a constructive role in the creation of Pakistan or in the construction of a polity in the country, Mujib broke the country into two. He recollects his earlier meeting with Mujib in the late 1940s in Lahore and suggests that he was not sincere with the country as well as his own leadership. He calls Mujib's Six Points six poisonous snakes but does not provide any answer as to why this 'thorn' of Pakistan's history and his 'six snakes' secured popular following and an overwhelming mandate from the East Pakistani people, which has had no precedence in the country's history.

A very different type of travelogue is written by Ahmad Salim<sup>39</sup> who visited Bangladesh in 1994 for a SAARC book fair. Making use of his stay there he visited a number of places of historical importance and met leaders and political workers who took active part in the liberation war of Bangladesh. Salim particularly revisits the poetry written in East Bengal in and after 1971. He interviewed many literary persons. The book, though slim, provides an insight into the Bangladeshi society, an area which is not too well known in Pakistan.

### Analytical works

By now a number of books have been published by Pakistani authors trying to analyze the breakup of the country in 1971. Of the earlier works, G.W. Choudhury,<sup>40</sup> Maj. General Fazal Mugeem Khan,<sup>41</sup> Mushtaq Ahmad<sup>42</sup>, Safdar Mahmood<sup>43</sup> Kalim Siddiqui<sup>44</sup>,

etc., remained important for a long time for they had sought to give the background of the 1971 crisis as well as the dynamics of the crisis itself in an analytical manner. Choudhury was a minister in Yahya Khan's cabinet and was a constitutional advisor of the regime. He shed light on the events of 1971 defending all the major policy decisions taken by Yahya, and portraying Mujib and Bhutto as the major figures whose allegedly rigid stances and dubious role intensified the crisis. Choudhury's account is quite apologetic as well so far as the role of the military regime was concerned. The only positive thing about the book is that it helps peeping into the wheeling and dealings of the military regime. Of particular importance is his observations regarding the cleavages within the military high command which was divided on the question whether a political solution was still possible after the elections or a military solution had become necessary.

Fazal Mugeem Khan served in high military positions and has to his credit at least four books which show his panchant for writing. His work, published soon after the breakup, criticized the military's involvement in political affairs and projected the view that the involvement of military in politics eroded the professionalism of the officers' corps and turned them into third class politicians and administrators. He observed that:

When the armed forces were allowed to be supreme in the country, there could have been no accountability for their officers' acts of omission and commission ... When the war came in 1971, the armed services were no longer professionally orientated. Their involvement in Martial Law and the country's politics had seriously harmed their professionalism.<sup>45</sup>

Mushtaq Ahmed's book carries his preface which gives its date of writing to be 15 December 1971. The contents of the book, however, cover the period up until the breakup of the country. The book provides an in-depth study of the Yahya regime, its political strategy, the trends of the 1970 general elections, the electoral result and their implications for the future conflict.

Safdar Mahmood discusses the political development of Pakistan between 1947 and 1969. He shows how the issues of representation prevented the political elite from agreeing to a federal constitution satisfying all the constituent units. It was in

this period that political differences between East and West Pakistan took the form of political polarization which further precipitated once the country came under the rule of the military. In 1969-70, Yahya Khan tried to play an arbiter's role but the elections held on the basis of his Legal Framework Order unleashed a political crisis, which he proved himself to be incapable to handle. The mistakes of Pakistan's ruling classes and the two military regimes of Ayub and Yahya brought about a situation which was exploited by India to erode the integrity of Pakistan.

While the other earlier writers analyzed the breakup of Pakistan in the background of the political and constitutional crises of the country, the crises themselves were thought to be the result of divergent and competing political and regional interests. These authors did refer to the economic imbalance between East and West Pakistan but did not take the economic factor beyond this. How the imbalances in economy affect the creation of social formations and particular socio-economic interest groups and how these groups affect political development did not attract the attention of these authors. One of the earliest works which broke the rather simpler political-constitutional development paradigm, and endeavoured to enlarge the economic argument to explain the East Pakistan political crisis came in the form of Kalim Siddiqui's book. Siddiqui, through his well-researched work, tried to find linkages between what happened in Pakistan in 1971 and Pakistan's historical legacy of colonial rule. He holds that the interplay of politics of post-1947 Pakistan was predominantly a pre-occupation of the political elite which was inherited by the country from the British Raj. The elite were groomed in a political culture of projecting group interests which essentially were the interests of none else but these elite themselves. The grassroots of Pakistan and the radical objectives and agenda which these could have, were undermined by the elite politics. Siddiqui sees the 1971 crisis as overshadowing of the actual social class interests by the East-West conflict spearheaded by the elites of the two wings.

Kalim  
Siddiqui

The initial analytical books published in the first decade after the dismemberment of Pakistan were mostly written in a bit of haste and without sufficient archival material. It should therefore be understandable that these relied mostly on



newspapers, besides scarce official sources. With the passage of time new source material started coming in. The American and British archives were opened, and within South Asia itself, the flow of information started albeit slowly. The cumulative result of all this came to be reflected in a new crop of analytical works. However, emotional, one-sided and conspiracy theory based publications continued to remain in ascendance, some of which are worth mentioning. Syed Shabbir Hussain's book<sup>46</sup> defends the military regime all the way and puts the entire blame of the 1971 events on three individuals—Bhutto, Mujib and Yahya—whose lust for power, according to him, blinded them. The author passes judgment that 'with the execution of Bhutto [in 1979 by military dictator Zia-ul-Haq], the process of retribution is somewhat complete. The three, who toyed with the destiny of more than a hundred million people... have been undone. Mujibur Rahman was shot dead along with his family members by young army officers ... General Yahya Khan was disgraced, then imprisoned and subsequently incapacitated through insults and tortures by his accomplice in the game. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto—the cleverest of the three—was consigned to the hangman's noose like a degenerate criminal.'<sup>47</sup> The book was written during Zia-ul-Haq's time when certain writers were encouraged to demonize politicians particularly Bhutto for all the ills the country was confronted with. The author does not hide his fascination for Ayub and his model of rule. An episode cited in the book explains it all. On Ayub's death in 1974, he rushed to his house where Ayub's Director of Intelligence and one of Pakistan's most influential civil servant, A.B. Awan, hugged the author; 'sad and in tears, he almost cried as if Ayub was listening: "You are going, leaving the country to dogs and swines – dogs and swines of your own making".'<sup>48</sup>

Inayatullah had also been a journalist who earned reputation for his writings on 1965 war. In these writings he eulogized the military but this was also the general trend as most of the country was carried away by the exaggerated reporting of the victories in war. The first shock to such a mindset had come in the form of the Tashkent Declaration, as a result of which both India and Pakistan had returned to their pre-war positions. But at the popular level the impression of extraordinary victories continued, thanks to the war-maniac media. Inayatullah wrote a

number of books in this context. After 1971, he wrote another book<sup>49</sup> on the dismemberment of Pakistan, which to him was a bigger tragedy than the fall of Baghdad and Granada. But, to him, this was the doing of Pakistani political leadership which, while fulfilling its nefarious objective of doing away with the integrity of the country, fulfilled the objective of India as well. The Indian objective, to him, had been the erosion of 'the Muslims' military power'. He alleged that after the breakup of the country, writers and generals were backed by the government to write accounts, putting all the blame of the defeat on the military. It seems that during Zia's time the image of the army was tried to be resurrected criticizing the politicians for the breakup of the country. Inayatullah's book aptly fulfilled this objective.

The books written after the first decade following the dismemberment of the country include better and relatively more objective books. Among these one may refer to Anwar Dil and Afia Dil's joint publication<sup>50</sup> The book is an exhaustive and detailed study of East Bengal's politics beginning from 1905 to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The authors assert that throughout these 65 years, language played the most important role in the politics of Bengal. In this respect, they highlight the role of Bengali writers and literary societies in promoting the sense of Bengali identity. The Bengali language movement served as the backbone of Bengali political assertions and this culminated in the creation of a separate homeland based on Bengali nationalism.

K.K. Aziz<sup>51</sup> focuses the role of world powers—US, UK, Soviet Union, and China—in the crisis of 1971. Based on an incredibly enormous source material Aziz chronicles all the events meticulously in order to bring to light the role of big powers. The author shows that Pakistan government policies during the crisis did not receive international support except for China but even China urged Yahya regime to exercise moderation in handling the East Pakistan crisis. 'During the actual war', he observes, 'China took no action in practical terms but continued her moral and political support to Pakistan.'<sup>52</sup>

Another exhaustive work covering the economic, political and military aspects of the crisis along with a detailed account of the war theatre was produced by Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Kamal Matinuddin.<sup>53</sup> The book traces the causes of the alienation of the

Eastern wing of the country and discusses how the remedial measures proved quite short of the actual requirements. Like most of the authors coming from military background he puts the case of the military in stronger terms, arguing that it was in very hostile circumstances that the military was asked to defend the integrity of the country. This was difficult in the face of domestic and international environment with the result that the military had to face unprecedented humiliation. The author concludes that a 'delicate fabric woven from a single strand cannot sustain the pulls and pressures inherent in a multi-ethnic and poly-lingual society, more so when one of its constituent units happened to be located in a different geographic zone'. He further asserts that the ethnocentric sub-nationalism was not something unique to Pakistan as it is an intrinsic component of many multi-ethnic societies. But in order to keep it within bounds there is a need to demonstrate a great deal of tolerance and cultural pluralism should be accepted.<sup>54</sup>

Hasan Zaheer's work is by far the most detailed, all-encompassing and primary sources-based attempt made by any Pakistani author.<sup>55</sup> The thoroughly documented work looks into the genesis of the Pakistan movement and Bengal's active role in it. He locates a strong sense of Bengali identity even during the Pakistan movement. Therefore, to him it was not surprising that soon after the creation of the country, East Bengal asserted for its due position in the federation of Pakistan. The author discusses in detail the political developments of the two turbulent decades after 1947. He holds that instead of accommodating the Bengali demands and restructuring the state system, the ruling elite and the military government of Pakistan resorted to a military solution in the name of restoring the authority of the state. As a senior civil servant, he saw the ramifications of the military action in East Pakistan and noted the severity of the crisis. He also witnessed the surrender the details of which have been provided by him in a later chapter. The author delves into the economic consequences of military action in East Pakistan where normal industrial and trade activities were disturbed, infrastructure was severely damaged, and port operations were curtailed, all this resulting in the disruption of the entire economic system. The consequences of the situation in East Pakistan spread to the overall economy of the country

which by the end of 1971 was not in a position to sustain a long war.

Most of the analytical books dealing with 1971 have one general method of treating the subject. These search for various causes – political, ethnic, linguistic, economic, and external – which presumably precipitated the crisis in East Pakistan. These works look into the response of the central government and the discrepancies between the needs and the responses. They further focus the 1970 elections and the results thereof in order to show that the electoral mandate created a wedge which called for inter-elite compromise for the sustenance of the country. Here, the failure in reaching a formula which could provide a basis for a viable federation is projected as the failure of individuals – Mujib, Bhutto and Yahya. It is asserted that this failure led to a crisis where the military took a decision to resort to a military solution, which is opposed by a number of authors while a few regard it as inevitable. This pattern of exploration, however, provides detailed information and equips the reader with useful data which has increased with the passage of time, yet it fails to provide a holistic social science perspective of the dismemberment of Pakistan. Most of these books have been written by former civil servants, military personnel and journalists. It is, therefore, understandable that they do not provide a conceptual grounding of the details and data accumulated in their works. Given the overall poor state of social science research in the six and a half decades of Pakistan's history, it is understandable, though, why that big conceptual works on the East Pakistan crisis did not appear. However, the few noticeable attempts are worth mentioning. As noted earlier, Kalim Siddiqi had tried to understand the East Pakistan crisis along the colonial and postcolonial elite paradigm which overshadowed the real socio-economic diversity and the rich-poor dichotomy in the country.

Two other books which call for attention are by Humayun<sup>56</sup> and Alqama<sup>57</sup>. Not only do they make a detailed study of 1971 on the basis of diverse primary and secondary sources, they also provide a conceptual framework in which they place their studies. Humayun makes use of the theoretical literature on ethnicity as well as federalism. After surveying the literature in some detail he draws certain conclusions about Pakistan's realities. He holds that a federal arrangement could hardly be successful in

the case of Pakistan where ethnically two very diverse regions constituted the country. These regions were not only culturally and ethnically quite different but were also far away from each other. With the resources and economy of a Third World poor country it was difficult to keep the two in one fold. Instead it would have been better if a confederal arrangement was adopted for the country right in the beginning. The confederation or a zonal federation type of arrangement would have prevented the type of estrangement which got cultivated between the two once they were sought to be kept in a federal model which could not be materialized to the full. Humayun's explanation of Six-Point Programme also suggests that it was a programme for a confederation but the political class and the ruling military junta of Pakistan were not prepared to entertain an idea like this even though it seemed to be the only way out to keep a pretense of the country's unity without widening the rifts between the two wings.

As against Humayun, Alqama builds his explanation on the basis of the theory of uneven development. Relying on the model of Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin, he tries to explain the East-West diversity in economic development. Not only this, he also moves on to further benefit from Michael Hechter's model of internal colonialism to suggest that West Pakistan's economic development was so heavily dependent on the resources and the foreign exchange earned by the exports of East Pakistan's raw material that one could easily identify an internal colonial relationship between the two wings of the country. This argument has been further developed by Feroz Ahmed<sup>58</sup> in his writings on the creation of Bangladesh. Feroz Ahmed holds that the paradigm of colonial relations between the two wings extended from economic exploitation of resources to exploitation of East Pakistan's cheap labour. He also discusses the language issue and interprets the successive central governments' policies as the representation of the cultural domination of the western wing.

## Conclusion

A survey of the books and other works produced in Pakistan on the tragic events of 1971 may help in realizing that most of the Pakistani writers have not addressed these events objectively. The major thrust of the Pakistani writers has been on blaming

individuals rather than identifying the social, economic and political causes of the breakup of the country.

The failure of Pakistan's historians and scholars in doing so left the field open for those who could not pen down more than emotional things. Therefore, a plethora of such writings, instead of suggesting corrective measures, has cultivated sentimentalism. Four decades down the road Pakistani intelligentsia desperately needs to shun this emotionalism and get rid of the conspiracy theory mindset. It must be accepted that there definitely had been reasons emanating from the peculiar economic policies and political projects imposed from above regularly which gave to the Bengalis a sense of alienation and marginalization. The historical causes accumulated over a period of time were further aggravated after the 1970 elections when the military regime of General Yahya Khan as well as a significant segment of the political elite of West Pakistan demonstrated through their acts that they were not prepared to accept the verdict of the Bengali people. Having won 160 of 162 general seats reserved for East Pakistan in the Constituent Assembly with a total of 300 general seats, Awami League had not only won the simple majority but had also demonstrated its overwhelming support in East Pakistan. No matter what stances, right or wrong, the Awami League took in the subsequent weeks, the most important fact was that the moral and legal legitimacy had gone to its side. The crisis on the future constitution, as well as the political turmoil that it entailed, were the things which the regime in power was supposed to handle. It was here that the regime's military background worked against it. Needless to say that in Pakistan it has been shown time and again that political crisis management is where a military regime finds itself at its weakest.

The separation of East Pakistan remains a potential area for future research. There is a need to look into the historical and political causes which paved the way for the dismemberment of Pakistan. Pakistani historians would perhaps do well if they accept the challenge to produce a holistic account of 1971 in a theoretical framework emerging from the convergence of different disciplines. This framework would certainly have a profound impact on the way of thinking of those people who mostly indulge in speculative and unsound formulations.

Military falls  
political short on  
crises management

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# **Pakistani Baloch Historiography: An Elitist Self-Assertive Discourse**

*Muhammad Shafique*

## **Introduction**

Centralizing the postmodern perspective of subjectivity of history and historiography to historians' contemporary challenges and issues,<sup>1</sup> the paper aims to analyse some of the conflicting epistemological questions and views in Baloch Historiography, representing paradoxes of understandings of the past and vision of future among the Baloches, belonging to the province of Balochistan in Pakistan. Exploring the traditional form of historical-memory, the conflict between the theoretical construction of Baloch past and the resultant image of Baloch identity form the core questions for this undertaking. For, it evolves around the thematic view that Baloch historiography, emerging very soon after the process of decolonization in South Asia, under the impact of Western ideas of knowledge, reflects an elitist self-assertive discourse of Baloch identity. Fundamentally, this self-assertion emerges in the form of 'Baloch Nationalist' discourse against Imperial powers, which not only tried to conquer the land and people of Balochistan, but also tried to construct Baloch historical identity with their own perceptions. The claims to a status of 'Nationhood' can be seen as a part of Baloch interaction with the western powers and Baloch resistance to the British rule to the attainment of self-rule rather meaningful independence. To strengthen the nationalist claims against the concept of a tribally fragmented Baloch identity, it aims to resolve the conflict within Baloch hierarchical socio-political and tribal formations, through the construction of a uni-linear Baloch past, either on the racial basis or geo-cultural basis. Thus Baloch Historiography is visualizing and propagating an identity seeking access to political power.

It is very hard to find an 'historiographic'<sup>3</sup> of Baloch writings, other than the comments on individual threads of views

or events by the users of histories written by Baloch historians. Therefore, the paper mixes an introductory narration of Baloch Historiography with the analytical method and, approaches the conflicting paradigms of Baloch Historiography through the application of the method of discourse analysis. The Pakistani Baloches appear to be leading this discourse. Therefore, the taxonomical models, samples and references for this study are chosen from Urdu and English Baloch historiography since the decolonization of the South Asia subcontinent.

### **Baloch self-assertion and emergence of modern Baloch historiography**

The foundation of modern Baloch historiography appears to be an outcome of a sort of discourse of Baloch self-assertion, from the time of the formation of Pakistan to the current times. It responds to the images, perceptions, and places assigned to Baloches in the international construction of ethnic, cultural and social map of the world, especially by the British, as well as a response to the Baloch space in the intellectual construction of Pakistani national identity. An assumption of submerging Baloch identity and rights within the concept of 'Two Nation Theory' of Pakistani identity is a common complaint launched by the Baloch intellectuals.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Baloch intellectuals as well as historians have tried their level to assert by the beginning of the process of decolonization what Sardar Khan Baluch demands: 'Let the Baloch people read their history, recollect the past, review the present, resign to unity and discipline and resolve for a glorious and firm future'.<sup>5</sup> In the same way, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch writes: 'Our mission is... unity in our rank and file; all Baloches irrespective of their tribal affinity must stand united and shake off their internal tribal feuds...'.<sup>6</sup>

This Baloch intellectual self assertion has emerged out of Baloch sense of intellectual and political deprivation, and resultant resistant-nationalism. Since the establishment of Baloch confederacy of Khanate of Kalat under the headship of Mir Nasir Khan Nuri (1749-1817), the Baloches have a claim to political independence. However, resisting to the imperial pressures from Russians, British and Persians, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, they were expecting an independent status at the liquidation of British Indian Empire after the Second World

War. The annexation of Balochistan with Pakistan, subsequent Baloch nationalists' activist movements in 1948, 1958, and 1973, and resultant denial of political rights to Baloches through the Pakistani government's military operation in Balochistan, has made resistance a permanent part of Baloch Historiography.<sup>7</sup> In 1958, Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch was arrested and imprisoned and thousands of Baloches were massacred and their villages were ruined. In the same context, the murder of Gul Khan Nasir's brother and other Baloch leaders in the military oppression of 1973, provided a blood-food to Baloch nationalism and nationalist historiography.

This consciousness of Baloch identity and intellectual self-assertion has manifested itself in multiple forms and at multiple levels of consciousness of Baloch past. We can identify four major levels of this self-assertion and consciousness of past and history among the Baloches.

1. It has promoted a tendency of collecting and editing the oral traditions, (Daftar) and (Dastan), into written form.<sup>8</sup> These collections form the basic source for the understanding of Baloch past and for the Historiography of Baloches and Balochistan. Most of the collectors of such *Daftar* and *Dastan* later became historians of Balochistan.
2. The translations of western, especially English travelogues, journals, memoirs, documents, Sanads and observations form a major part of Baloch consciousness of history and past. These translations also appear to be a part of Baloch discourse with the external elements contributing potentially to the knowledge of Baloch society.<sup>9</sup>
3. The third category of historical narration can be seen in the form of Hal. Although *Hal* forms the fundamental category of travelogue, memoir, biography and autobiography, its collections can not be found in the Baloch literature. Only example of this type of consciousness among the Baloches is Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch's Autobiography in which he has provided pedigree of the ruling family of Kalat and his own participation in the regional politics as Khan of Kalat.<sup>10</sup> Yet it is dominated by western style and does not reflect a traditional Baloch style.

4. The culmination of three types of historical consciousnesses resulted in the development of a consciousness of need for the writing of western style history of Baloches and Balochistan, other than the discourse on contemporary politics.

These four forms of representation of Baloch historical consciousness are contributed by almost the same class of elite intellectuals and can be categorised as what Inayatullah Baloch termed 'elite writings'.<sup>11</sup> The collections of Baloch traditional literary contributions, translations and personal experiences/biographies as sources of historical consciousness are used by their editors and collectors for the mega-historiographic narratives of Baloches and Balochistan.

Four amateur historians belonging to Baloch elites can be attributed as the contributors of mega-narratives of Baloch history. Although Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch's 'Baluch a Nation' can be considered the first historiographic monograph on Baloch national identity,<sup>12</sup> yet the credit of writing first complete history of Balochistan goes to the people poet of Balochistan Mir Gul Khan Nasir (1914-1983). The first volume of his Traikh-e-Balochistan in Urdu was published in 1952 which was complemented by a second volume in 1957. Since then several editions and reprints of this book have been published.<sup>13</sup> His second contribution to the history of Baloch race is his Koch-o-Baloch which basically deals with the racial genealogies of Kurd tribes' relations with the Baloch tribes.<sup>14</sup>

The discourse of Baloch historical identity through the historiography was carried on in a more systematic way by Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch in his History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan, published in 1958, which is actually an extended and enlarged version of his Baluch a Nation (1947).<sup>15</sup> It became a popular work of elites concern and several editions of this book has been published since 1958, in 1962, 1977 and 1984. This mega-narrative was complemented by two other works of Muhammad Sardar Khan: Great Baluch, The Life and Times of Ameer Chakar Rind 1454-1551 which was published in 1965, and A Literary History of Baluchistan published in two volumes in 1977 and 1984, both from Quetta.

The military rule of Ayub Khan seems to have put this debate on halt. Therefore, other two mega-narratives appeared in the mid 1970s, during the Bhutto's era. Mir Ahmad Yar Khan

Baluch's *Inside Baluchistan* was published in 1975 from Karachi and Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri Bijarani's *Searchlights on Baloches and Balochistan* was published in 1977 from Quetta. Bijarani had already compiled three works of fundamental historical importance. His *Kadim Balochi Sha'ri* was published in 1963, *Azmanah-e-Baloch, Tarikh aur Rawaiyati* was published in 1965 and after that his *The Baloches Through Centuries* was published, all from Quetta. His *Searchlights* appear to be a result of these earlier collections and compilations as well as a response to discourse launched by Gul Khan Nasir and Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch.

Although these mega-narratives of Baloch history are written by amateur historians,<sup>16</sup> yet are considered to be 'monumental' in the construction of Baloch identity and have set the dimensions, nature, scope, purpose and subject matter of Baloch Historiography. Other historical narrations seem to be constructed on, and devoted to, the discourse and arguments developed in these mega-narratives. However, the plurality of discourse of Baloch historical identity is hegemonized by a uni-linear homogenous approach of 'Baloch nationalism' in the post 1970s intellectual discourse. In this perspective, professional academic historiography of Baloches and Balochistan is still an awaited concern.

This historiography forms a part of a multiple level attempt to construct a Baloch national identity. It reflects a discourse of Baloch intellectual self-assertion at three levels: elitist, national and tribal.

### **Elitist self-assertion**

The foundation of Baloch historiography was laid down by a generation of Baloch elitist leadership. Therefore, Baloch elitist self assertion appears to be a fundamental concern in the Baloch historiography. The purpose, nature, content and methodology of this discourse, primarily, are constructed under a strong socio-political and racial elitist perception. It reflects a homogenous type of data, evolution of Baloch identity, structure of Baloch society and issues of intellectual discourse.

This discourse is contributed at large by the intellectuals belonging to varied stratagems of Baloch elites, basically, members of the families having deep roots in the tribal system of power. For

example, the contributors of four mega narratives of Baloch past belonged to the families of Baloch elites (Sardar). Muhammad Sardar Khan Baloch belonged to the family of Sardar of Gashkori branch of Rind tribe of Baloches.<sup>17</sup> Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch himself was the last Khan of Kalat, belonging to Ahmadzai tribe of Brahuis.<sup>18</sup> Mir Khuda Bakhsh was nourished as member of the family of Sardars of Bijarani branch of Marri Rind tribe of Baloches.<sup>19</sup> Mir Gul Khan Naseer belonged to the leading family of celebrated Paindzai sub-clan of the Zagr Mengal branch of Brahui Tribe.<sup>20</sup> Even the other contributors to historical discourse belong to the same hierarchy of Baloch tribal leadership with the exception of a few who belong to the post independence migrant settlers.<sup>21</sup>

The modern Baloch historiography emerged out of Baloch interaction with the western elites and Baloch interface with the western education under the influence of postmodern and postcolonial phenomena of expanding frontiers of knowledge, identity and socio-cultural and political legitimacy beyond a 'colonial centric' modern construct of knowledge, to the level of study of marginalized and peripheral people and places.<sup>22</sup>

Educated at the centres of Western learning outside Balochistan, in other parts of Pakistan and in the West, especially Britain, Baloch educated elites and historians have had a close affinity with the elites of other parts of Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and elites of Britain. Therefore, these amateur historians have constructed historical discourse on the basis of their discourse with their counterpart elites on western paradigm of knowledge and identity. Sardar Khan Baloch's criticism of British perception of Baloch identity, virtually followed by all later Baloch historians, reflects this sort of elitist nature of Baloch historiography. He writes:

Some of the British Scholars enterprised to write the history of the race and the country but their pen could not traverse beyond the region of folk-lore traditions, and, hence their work proved good as fiction instead of history and they failed badly to add original research or colour to the lost story of this historic race.<sup>23</sup>

As other decolonised people also have constructed their views on the model of colonial construction of Baloch identity, this discourse also reflected a response to the decolonised Pakistani

elites' perception and treatment of Baloches. Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch writes:

The reins of the leadership fell into the hand of those who had neither the vision nor the political wisdom.... The insulting treatment Baloch government received at their hands was least expected of them.... The government of Pakistan raised their status [The tributary states of Khanate of Kalat] to the level of separate states and thus divided the historically known state into four pieces.<sup>(24)</sup>

This structure and response of historiographic concern, both, in the eyes of post-modern critics, fundamentally, represent an elitist paradigm of power. As western education, rather more soundly, education is almost unknown to common Baloch people, therefore, Baloch historiography, dominated by English language or Urdu, has very little concern with the common Baloch. Simultaneously, as this discourse is response to the Western intellectuals or Western educated elites, therefore, medium of this discourse is mostly English or Urdu. It is written in the language and style of English elites, using examples from Greek mythology and comparing Baloch heroes with the heroes of the European world.<sup>(25)</sup> It becomes difficult, even for a common Pakistani reader of comparatively advanced areas, educated in western learning, to understand such narrative.<sup>(26)</sup> However, through medium and style of narration, Baloch elites seem to be interacting themselves with the Western elites and maintaining distance with the common masses on Balbanian<sup>(27)</sup> model of politics rather than integrating themselves with the common Baloch tribesmen.

The major problem with this type of elitist discourse is that rather than struggling to construct a brilliant past of their ancestry, the Baloch historians have commonly constructed an 'ahistorical' Baloch identity, living more on general perception than living with a sense of historical evolution and accumulation of the treasures of past experiences. They have failed to find a single piece of literature which could be termed as history in modern form and could provide an evidence of Baloch historiography prior to 1950s, in spite of claims of belonging an ancestry who had developed most advanced civilization of ancient history of mankind. Instead, they have connected Baloches with a traditional form of society,



oral histories & written  
ahistoric nature of Baloch society.

## Pakistani Baloch Historiography: An Elitist Self-Assertive Discourse

bearing a medieval socio-political and intellectual structure. Baloch historians' focus on the presentation of traditional cultural patterns of self-survival and tribal co-existence along with inter-tribal relations highlight an 'ahistoric' nature of Baloch society.

→ Therefore, Baloch race, having a little sense of evolution in time and space, represents one of the darkest chapters in the history of mankind.<sup>(28)</sup> This construction of correlation between 'ahistoricity' and tradition does not match with Baloches' claims of belonging to an ancient race of elites and their love for antiquity. The result of this kind of empirical investigation is the representation of a Baloch identity which has been unable to produce any kind of historical literature throughout its history, as produced by the other Asiatic civilizations. They are represented as a community that expresses through the sword instead of the pen and have preferred traces of blood, anarchy and feud, instead of history and literature. In this construction, the search for intricate delicacies of literature and past become 'the occupation of idle men.'<sup>(29)</sup> Sardar Khan Baluch claims:

Facts and figures are an insult to the Baloch mind and as such no authentic record exists among the indigenous populace. The race since the glimmer of history seems to feel more pleasure and satisfaction in the saddle than at the scholarly desk, and is not endowed with pen of the meditative writers. The history of the race, therefore, is still preserved in vague traditions and literature in ballad which survived to us by oral tradition from generations to generations in crude form, undated and unheeded. The nomadic life of the race has given a nomadic colour to their history, which is mainly a history of migrations, feuds and forays.<sup>(30)</sup>

However, Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch's criticism, having a bearing of Western model of historiography, does not imply to the fundamentality of cultural and fragmented form of historical memory to any human society, either having a chronologically connected and progressive concept of history or not. The Baloch society has preserved the 'past of choice' and like all traditional medieval cultural societies, racial-pedigree, tribal-genealogy and cultural memory consist of epics or achievements of

past of choice

ancestors, reflecting the stories of bravery and personal and tribal pride and prejudices, form the foundation of Baloch consciousness of past and history. Three basic traditional terms potentially reflect the traditional Baloch concept of past, memory, history and historiography: Daftar, Dastan and Hal.

### **Baloch Daftar**

The traditional cultural form of 'historical consciousness' or consciousness of past among the Baloches appear to be in the form of *Daftar*. The word, in Balochi language, is used as synonym for past, record of past or history. As there is no record of Baloch history, except in some poetics, therefore, it can be termed as 'genealogical ballads', which contain a record of the racial, tribal, clan and family pedigrees and genealogies. These *Daftar* preserved the hierarchical structure of Baloch society from Tuman (tribe), Kheil (sub-tribe), Pari (clan) and Phali (family), indicating the independence and individuality of each level from the major administration of tribe.<sup>31</sup> Such genealogical tables serve a system of mutual tribal and family relations among the Baloches and maintain distinction between Baloches and non-Baloches. *Daftar* also throw light on the origin and genesis of Baloch race and the evolution of the race in history. One major record of such *Daftar* was collected by Rai Bahadur Hato Ram, British Political Assistant for Balochistan, and was published as *Balochi Namah* in 1898.<sup>32</sup> Later, this *Balochi Namah* was published with the title of 'Tarikh-e-Balochistan' in 1907.<sup>33</sup> This 'Tarikh-e-Balochistan' has been published several times since 1907. Malik Allah-Bakhsh's *Baloch Qaum Ke Tarikh ke Chand Parishan Daftar Auraq* (Some alarming pages from the history of Baloch nation) also reflects the use of the words for the narration of events and as record of past.<sup>34</sup> Yet this form of literature has not been claimed or presented as history by the Baloches.

### **Baloch Dastan**

*epical poetry*  
The second form of historical record and memory of past among the Baloches has been *Dastan*. *Dastan* basically represents 'story' in many languages. Among the Baloches such *Dastan* primarily can be considered epical poetry, having record of the heroic achievements, wars, battles and duets of Baloches. One such

*Dastan* throws light on the Portuguese-Baloch relations in the fifteenth century coastal areas of Balochistan and contains record of Baloch bravery.<sup>35</sup> Such *Dastan* became popular during the nineteenth century British-Baloch conflict. However, the most popular *Dastan* have been *Chupao*. *Chupao* can be understood as an organised tribal incursion, inroad or raid to the neighbouring areas of a particular Baloch tribe to plunder those commercial caravans who had not got a prior permission to pass through the neighbourhood and had not paid any tax to the tribal head. As Balochistan mostly has been a barren land, very difficult to live and find livelihood, therefore, such *Chupao* were a major source of survival and provided a maximum of livelihood. Therefore, these *Chupao* were remembered with great honour and prestige especially at the time of starvation. In spite of this fundamental position of *Chupao* in the Baloch system of society, the Baloch historians have been unable to develop a record of such *Chupao* and absence of such records has blocked the way of understanding of past beyond imperial and tribal wars among the Baloches.

### **Baloch Hal**

The third traditional form of Baloch memory has been called 'Hal'. It was basically an oral statement of a travel experience, observations and achievements, from the beginning of the travel to the end, with formal and informal details. Therefore, it can be considered a form of oral travelogue or memoir. As traditionally travelers were considered to be a source of dissemination of information and exotic knowledge among the Baloch tribes and in the region, therefore, the 'hal' has also been applied to the 'news' and 'newspaper'. One best example of this use is 'Baloch Hal', an online English newspaper published from Quetta, the capital of the province of Balochistan.<sup>36</sup> As 'hal' has been an oral tradition, therefore, one can hardly find any record of such travelogues or memoirs among the Baloches and the major record of the past can actually be found in *Daftar* and *Dastan*. Such travel memoirs or news were mostly forgotten very soon after the departure of travelers and attract only a temporary or short term attention of the Baloch people as they have been more interested in their own 'cultural self' than 'others'. One can hardly find any collection of

short term as all oral histories

'Baloch hal'. Therefore, Baloch historiography has remained unable to use such sources potentially.

Using a diverse set of sources, most of the Baloch historians themselves have challenged the authenticity of the Baloch tradition of *Daftar* and *Dastan*.<sup>37</sup> Even for the modern period of history from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward, when the Khanate of Kalat had taken a definite political authority from Nadir Shah Afshar, the Baloch historians seem to be unable to find ethnic sources of information. The major sources of modern Baloch historiography come from Persian or English sources. The period prior to the advent of the Mughals and the British in India is generally attributed to *Shahnamah Firdusi*, which was written during the tenth century of Christian era. For the later period, mostly the Mughal and Sindhi sources are used. Major information seems to be drawn from Mirza Kalich Baig's *Tarikh-i-Sind*, Ali Sher Kanei's *Tuhfatul Kiram* and Yaqut's *Mu'jam-al Buldan*. However what is important is that for the ancient history of the Baloches, generally no authentic Baloch source has been used. Some ballads used for historical understanding of ancient past appear to belong to tenth century, indicating Baloch migration from Halab and claiming a Semitic origin of the Baloches. All major sources used for ancient and modern period appear to be English, especially, travelogues, memoirs and extracts. Even some times the references to Baloch *Daftar* and *Dastan* are not made directly to the Baloch empirical observation, rather to the English collections of Baloch Poetry, especially to Lt. Leech publication of a few Balochi poems in the Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1840 and Mr. Dames, publication of Popular Poetry of Baloches in 1875.<sup>38</sup>

This construction of a historical society and a view of Baloch society lacking historical consciousness, reflects a division between elites and people. Not only Baloch historians have been reluctant to use the sources of different tribes, rather have challenged the genealogies of other tribes. The written and literary sources can be found preserved by the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the formal Baloch historiography appear to be a modern phenomena.

### Baloch national self-assertion

This elitist self assertion has constructed the Baloch national self and political identity. The common historical facts used in this

elite history  
suffers from  
intra-tribe  
challenges  
claims  
superiority

discourse of national self-assertion are fundamentally elitist, based on a racial chivalry of wars, feuds, conflicts, migrations and claims to tribal superiority, pride and honour. Three major concerns indicate a unity of elitist purpose in Baloch historiography: racial homogeneity, chivalrous heroism and a legacy of resistance to rival-powers.

### **Racial homogeneity**

Racial homogeneity appears to be a central point of concern for the Baloch historians. All the historians, in spite of having difference of opinion on the origin of Baloch and challenging genealogies of rival tribes, have a consensus on the racial origin of the Baloch identity. The best examples of this type of problems are Brahuīs, Jatuis, Kurds, Dastis, Chandia, Kola and Gopang tribes' claims of belonging to Baloch race of Middle Eastern origin,<sup>39</sup> in spite that such claims are challenged by so many Western and Baloch scholars such as Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, Maulana Abdullah Dirmani, Qazi Abdul Samad Sarbazi, etc.<sup>40</sup> Yet, the mainstream historiography has a consensus on the Semitic origin of Baloch race. *Semitic origins*

### **Chivalrous heroism**

The second important feature of Baloch historiography is the presentation of a chivalrous heroism of Baloches as a warrior-martial race that loves wars, feuds, battles, and consequently takes pride in bravery, killings and bloodshed. Although all history of the Baloches is represented in this term, yet Chakir Khan Rind d.1555 appear to be the central accumulative point of all Baloch claims to the history of war, bravery, migration, feuds, and tribalism. Other than the treatment of Chakar Khan.

Rind as the only heroic figure in accumulative Baloch histories, Nur Ahmed Faridi's dramatic Urdu Biographic history of Chakar Khan as 'Chakar-i-Azam'<sup>41</sup> and Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch's *The Great Baloch (The Life and Times of Ameer Chakar Kahn Rind 1451-1551 A.D.)*,<sup>42</sup> represent a harmonizing and integrating figure throughout the history. Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch's heroism remains intact with the imperial motives as his two great heroes come from epic past and empire builders. His *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan* is dedicated to Ameer

Chakar Khan Rind (d. 1555) and Ameer Fateh 'Ali Khan Talpur (d.1802) founder of Emarat-i-Sind. In the same way Nur Ahmad Faridi has dedicated his history to Chakar Khan Rind.<sup>43</sup> This centralization of Chakar Khan Rind as a Baloch hero systematically marginalizes the Lashari tribe's heroes who had been in a strong conflicts with the Rind tribe. This problem, although not challenged by the foreign authors, has kept common Baloches alienated from what is generally called Baloch history. Resultantly, the Baloch historiography has not been able to develop a census on the concept of Baloch identity. Another aspect of this approach is the condemnation of Brahui Khanate of Kalat as a non-Baloch destroyer of Rind state. Therefore, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch's biographic history, *Inside Balochistan* provides a very little space to Mir Chakar Khan Rind. He seem to be rejecting the place given to Chakar Khan Rind in Baloch annals, pointing only that: 'The famous Baloch hero, Mir Chakar Khan Rind with his tribe, however, remained in the neighbourhoods of Sibi and Bolan regions for some time before affiliating himself with the Moghuls in 1556'.<sup>44</sup> The statement presents the end of resistant to the Mughal imperial rule on the part of Mir Chakar Khan Rind and thus tries to set the scope of the Baloch heroism anew.

### ***Tribal hierarchy and resistance***

This chivalrous heroism is constructed on, and it represents, a sort of Baloch love to tribal independence and hierarchical structure which inherits a resistance to foreign intervention into the Baloch affairs from the beginning of Baloch history to the present time. Although foreign writers have focused on the internal hierarchy of Baloch political system, the Baloch historians have generally not concentrated on this problem. One attempt to provide the detail of hierarchical structure of Baloch society is done by Mir Khuda Bhakhsh Marri Bijrani. However, his structure seems to be built on the sources of the British than on the empirical or oral historical investigations.<sup>45</sup> Most recent historiography has uni-linearly focused on the new current resistance as subject matter for the study of Baloch past, generating a new sort of chivalrous heroism as a food for Baloch nationalism and Baloch claims to self sovereignty.

### **Discourse of national-self identity**

This elitist national self assertion and the conflict within the Baloch hierarchies on the claims of elites' racial superiority and chivalrous heroism, in spite of its being originated as a response to foreign 'others' perceptions about the Baloch 'self', has initiated a discourse within the Baloch elites' intellectual and historical space on the nature and definition of Baloch identity. One can classify four major schools of Baloch historiography on the basis of arguments produced for the discourse of national self-definition.

#### **Geo-political nationalists**

First school led by Gul Khan Nasir, has focused on geo-politics as a unit of historical studies for the assertion of Baloch national identity. Under this unit of historical studies, geo-political unit of 'Khanate of Kalat' at the end of eighteenth century, becomes central to the Baloch claims to national self-assertion and the claims to independent status as a nation-state. Having close affinity with the traditional racial claims of Baloch identity and elite heroism of Chakar Khan, the Baloch hegemonic self under Mir Nasir Khan Nuri, becomes central in this system of historical identity. Its ideal appears to be the Khanate of Kalat, with boundaries it had at the time of Mir Nasir Khan at the end of eighteenth century. It begins with a racial identity and ends with the geo-political identity.<sup>46</sup> In this context, although Malik Saeed has explored the pre-historic period of Balochistan, yet, the pre-Baloch period and the process of development of Baloch hegemony in the region over the indigenous people of Balochistan has found almost no attention and the narration potentially remains racial. The basic problem with this construction is that it ignores the multiple hierarchical divisions of Baloch society and the 'commonwealth of tribes' status of Baloch confederacy. It also ignores the geo-racial and geo-political conflicts within the Baloch territories of Khanate of Kalat. This treatment ultimately develops a fear of elites' and larger tribes' suppression of opposite hierarchy of tribes, especially, by the dynasty and tribes who had ruled over the Khanate.

#### **Racial-tribal nationalists**

The second school believing in the racial-tribal structure of Baloch society, led by Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, has constructed

the claim of Baloch national identity on Baloch race. This school has treated Baloch state and society in terms of racial constructs and has focused on the tribal-racial attributes. For example, Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch criticises those tribal chiefs who set their shoulders to the 'British War Wheel' during the Second World War (1939-1945) and were employed to the British as 'middle man'. Therefore, rather than Mazaris and Legharis, Bugti and Marri Rind Tribal Baloches appear to be the real representatives of Baloch race and identity in his construction of Baloch identity. Therefore, 'race' as a unit of historical studies focuses more on the purity of blood and pedigree and genealogy of race, which ultimately lead to 'pride' in family history and challenges the genealogies of other tribes. That is why Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch is skeptical about the Baloch racial origin of a number of tribes claiming to be Baloch. He declares the origin of Marri tribe 'obscure', but Semitic and positive in terms of their physical strength, bravery as well as simplicity of manners and freedom from the 'restraints of the civilized society'. Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri refusal to accept the British authority and instructions during the Second World War<sup>47</sup> has been taken as a best representation of Marri's character and manners. However, this estimate is checked by a negative portrayal of Marri tribe's habits of 'robbery, ruthless murder and merciless revenge' which to a Marri are 'the salt of life'.<sup>48</sup> Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch also point to the Marri proverb: 'God will not favour a Marri who does not steel and rob'. In the same way, he believes 'whatever dynasty ruled Balochistan, the history of Marri tribe has ever been a record of broken faith'.<sup>49</sup>

This discourse of tribal-racial characteristics takes a very strong form in relation to Brahuīs and reflects a multi-dimensional tribal conflict within the Baloch claims to a uniform national identity. Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, belonging to Gashkori branch of Dombki Rind tribes, has very sharply criticised the racial, ethnic, moral and political culture of the Brahuīs. He condemns the racial obscurity of Brahui tribes and racial plurality of Kalat region, leading to the development of a 'strange miscellany'. Therefore, the Brahuīs for Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch represent an 'obscure' racial origin. Differentiate between the Brahuīs and Baloch, Afghans and the Persians, he believes that:



...all those tribes whose genealogy can not be referred to other distinguished races of Balochistan... may be well regarded as the real 'Brahui' nucleus. The low standard of civilization prevailing among them is an almost sure indication that they are a remnant of an ancient Indian race.<sup>50</sup>

Through the rejection of Brahui's claims of belonging to Semitic origin, Sardar Khan Baluch asserts his belief in the superiority of Semitic and inferiority of the Indian races. In the same way, the transfer of Baloch centre from Chakar Khan Rind's Capital, Sibi to Ahmadzai Brahuis' capital Kalat, was a tragedy of history for this group, which shifted the centre and structure of Baloch politics from racially pure Rind Baloch tribes to racially 'obscure' Brahuis.

This view leads Sardar Khan Baluch to challenge the Khanate of Kalat's claim to a status of Baloch national state. He believes that Khanate of Kalat was a 'Brahuis military confederacy' and not a 'peaceful, settled administrative rule'. The Brahui rule was the root cause of Baloch's deprivations, miseries and backwardness. The amalgamation of Baloch identity with the Khanate and construction of Baloch as a geographical identity (acceptance of all people belonging to Balochistan as Baloch), for Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, was the product of Nadir Khan, the Persian king of Afshar dynasty. As the head of military confederacy, majority of Brahui rulers had a wild behaviour that has been 'ideal of eastern terrorism' and 'intrigues'.<sup>51</sup> They had no taste for music or poetry and other arts. Therefore, 'the safety of head was more needed than the safety of pen' in a state like Khanate of Kalat.<sup>52</sup> Yet, he accepts symbolic fundamentality of the role of Mir Nasir Khan Nuri in the definition of Baloch political geography and identity.

### ***Muslim nationalist school***

An antithesis to Sardar Khan Baluch's view can be found in the writings of third school led by Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch, Khan-e-Baloch, ex-ruler of Kalat state.<sup>53</sup> Without referring to Baloch geo-nationalist or racial-nationalist discourse initiated by other Baloch writers on the nature of Baloch state, society and culture, without complaining about the 'obscurity' of Baloch race or foreign

influence on Baloch culture, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch has focused his arguments on the traditional authority, family documents and personal participation in the process of formation of modern Baloch history.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, he felt no need to claim any academic or intellectual authorship; rather he calls his history a 'political autobiography'. In assertion to his claim of belonging to Semitic Baloch race and in rejection of Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch's referring to the stronger possibility of Brahuis' Dravidian-Indian origin, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch simply puts 'Baluch' to his name and declares Baloches his 'life Blood'<sup>55</sup>. Although Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch refers to orientalist and British debate on the nature of Baloch state and society, his style remains non-academic and he does not even give references and notes. However his Baloch self assertion appears in the same way as is done by Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, referring to Baloch geography, ecology, resources and climate. He skips the demographical aspects of the race or region, which make his narration more geo-politics centred as done by Brahui historian Gul Khan Nasir in his *Tarikh-e-Balochistan*. In this way, Mir focuses on the centralization of Brahui dynasty and hegemony in the wake of a conflict and complex of racial superiority. In this way his *Inside Balochistan* is a 'first person-singular version of the origin and evolution of the dynastic rule of Ahmadzai Khans of Kalat'.<sup>56</sup> The Khan has his 'fingers on the public pulse of his subjects in the state' for which he had identified himself with the Muslim League and Pakistan. In this context, he highlights the progress made by the Khanate for the democratization of Baloch polity and establishment of efficient and responsible system of government and administration for the Baloch people.<sup>57</sup>

However, his autobiographic history of Balochistan appear to be a statement of dissatisfaction with regard to Baloch self assertion within the State of Pakistan. Denying the ethnic tribal formation of Balochistan for the sake of a greater Muslim community, the Khan had expected to consolidated Baloch people with a wider region of Muslim community, having possibility of wider range of socio-political and economic gains for the Baloches. He writes: 'By the time it fell upon me to shoulder the responsibility of Baloch leadership, Balochistan no longer enjoyed the glory, prestige and power it had in the time of the late Khan-e-

Azam Mir Nasir Khan Nuri'. However, for him, geographical locale and division was the main cause of the misery and decline of the Baloches. However Mir declares: 'Our purpose is... unity in our rank and file; all Baloches irrespective of their tribal affinity must stand united and shake off their internal tribal feuds, and work ceaselessly in strengthening Pakistan which is our homeland on a broader plane'. In this way, he asserts the need to fulfill the obligations imposed upon the Pakistan Government in relation to the Baloches.<sup>(58)</sup>

*pro Pakistan* → This sort of autobiographic history is constructed on the 'Dynastic' unit of historical studies and implies what was expected from geo-political unit of historical studies. Ignoring the tribal structure of Baloch society and problems of cultural diversity in Baloch society, this sort of presentation of Baloch identity focuses on the construction of an ideal Baloch future on the basis of 'two nation theory' and seeks the preservation of Baloch rights within the state structure of Pakistan.

### ***Baloch integrationist school***

The fourth 'Baloch integrationist school' is led by Mir Khuda Bakhsh Mari Bijarani and only academic historian Taj Mohammed Breseej. This school has tried to harmonise the concept of Baloch race within that of a geo-political 'Balochistan'. Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri Bijarani, rejecting the idea of a pure racial construct of now current Baloch society, argues in favour of a cross-racial Baloch society. He writes:

The theory of absolute purity of race or blood at this distinct age is a myth when one considers the fact human race has always been intermingling during its evolution of social life through the ages...the Baloch like any other people, can not claim to be devoid of an intermixture of other races. During the course of centuries, people of different racial groups had joined the Baloches. In fact one can notice streaks of Dravidian blood among some Brahui tribes of Kalat and Medes. Rajputs and Afghan strains among the Baloches of Sind, Punjab and Balochistan.<sup>(59)</sup>

In spite, Bijarani seeks a unity in Baloch tribal culture and structure and combines it with the mainstream of Semitic

Baloches. However, adopting a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural heterogeneous concept of Baloch identity, Taj Mohammed Breseeg rejects the idea of a single racial-hierarchy of Baloch tribes, highlights the idea of heterogeneous structure of Baloch tribal-political hierarchy and Baloch tribal culture. Therefore his unit becomes a purely geo-national identity. Rejecting the 'idealist view of national identity that emphasise similarities', he presents a 'pluralistic structure' of Baloch society which 'does not exclude heterogeneity' rather helps 'form potential building blocks of a positive future', in the form of 'Greater Balochistan'.

### **Conclusion**

Baloch historiography confirms the traditional view that history preserves, represents and constructs elitist structure of society's past and future. Its purpose, model, method, subject matter, discourse and authorship fundamentally appear to be elitist. Established on the racial-elites' concept of 'nationalism', Baloch historiography seems unable to come out of crises of racial-tribal identity and establish a coherent, harmonised and homogenized idea of heterogeneous and plural Baloch national identity. Therefore in spite of a futuristic outlook, Baloch historiography seems unable to provide resolution for the crisis and conflict of Baloch identity within the state structure of Pakistan and even within the Baloch tribal-politics.

Moreover, the Baloch historiography has totally neglected the historical construct of pre-Baloch migration era history and identity of the region and races inhabiting the region now called Balochistan. The focus on the migrations, conquests and feuds make Baloch history more a racial-temporal than spatial-temporal. It generates a paradox in Baloch construction of patriotism between region and race. Inability to address this question, until now is accelerating the conflict within the Baloch society and resultantly bloodshed. The problem becomes more acute in the sense that it widens the gulf between differing claims of assimilation of races and cultures in the region and thus forms a very strong hurdle in the development of Baloch nationalism. It indicate idealization of imperial past and authoritative culture, to overpower the smaller tribes and adjacent cultures among the Baloches than developing a consensus over Baloch nationalism or

developing a wider context for the definition of Baloch identity. In the adoption of a model of racial elites' chivalrous conquests as unit of Baloch historical self-assertion, other than the idea of Baloch elites' domination, Baloch race takes the form of political elite, to rule the other tribes of the region. This conflict of racial-superiority and geo-political construction of Balochistan seems to be harmonised by an idea of relation between racial-political Semitic elites and the establishment of Baloch state. However, constructing this idea, the Baloch historians seem to be unable to distinguish between 'national state' and empire. In this context, the maps developed by Baloch historians reflect four categories of Baloch territories: Balochistan proper which it may be said to represent unity of Baloch racial, linguistic, geographical and cultural identity; Persian Balochistan, the region of Baloch race and culture, part of Iran and administered by Persian hierarchy; Afghani Balochistan, the Pushtoo speaking region which once was under the control and administration of Khanate of Kalat and became part of Afghanistan through the British Afghan treaties; and the regions of Balochi population in Punjab and Sindh, although racially Baloch, but culturally and linguistically, Punjabi, Saraiki and Sindi.<sup>61</sup> These divisions are brought into two major historic-geographical categories of Baloch states and tribal territory, having major divisions of pre-one-unit principdom of Las Bela, the Chiefships of Kharan. And Chagai, the Country of Makran, tribal territory, Sind Baloches, Derajat Baloches, the Persian Baloches, the Brahuis. This reflect an imperial map bringing all regions under the claims of Baloch race's political hegemony where there is a Baloch population or which have been under Baloch rule some time in the past. This construction of the past map of Balochistan has developed the idea of a 'Greater Balochistan' for the future.<sup>62</sup> However, idealising this power structure, Baloch historiography has neglected or marginalized the culture of internal feuds among the Baloch tribes.

This elitist political construct of future Baloch national identity along with a feeling of political deprivation has kept Baloch historiography still under the modernist paradigm of politics and hegemony, race and superiority and power and empire which has hampered the progress of Baloch consciousness of past and history. The post-modernistic approach of going beyond

politics and individualism to the assertion of people's problems and rights, have not been able to find a place and space in the Baloch historiography. Even the internal aspects of Baloch society explored by exotic researchers are not kept open for consideration by the Baloch historians. As a part of political self assertion of Baloches as a nation, Baloch historiography, in postmodern critical terms, forms a part of Baloch elites' struggle to preserve their elite status, through historiographic recognition of resistance as a Baloch national trait. However, this treatment has developed a consciousness of 'centrality' and 'marginality' among the Baloch tribes and has widened the gulf within Baloch society.

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## Notes and References

- 1 In the postmodern perspective, the distinction between History and Historiography seems to be eliminated. For a postmodern view of history and historiography see F.R. Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism', in *History and Theory*, Vol.28, No. 2 (May, 1989), pp.137-53; and '[Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations]: Reply to Professor Zagorin', in *History and Theory*, Vol.29. No. 3 (October 1990), pp. 275-96.
- 2 The claims to a status of 'nationhood' emerged even before the emergence of Baloch Historiography. See for details A.B. Awan, *Baluchistan Historical and Political Process* (London: New Century Publishers, 1985).
- 3 The term is being used here to denote the 'study of historiography'. One alternate term for the 'study of historiography' can be 'historiology'. However these terms need to be discussed at length to clearly distinguish between 'historiography' and 'study of historiography'. Some historians have used the term 'history of history', which does not indicate any sign of study of historiography rather reflecting the history of the concept of 'history' or a review of history writings. The difference between 'History' and 'Historiography' appear to be same as that of a 'natural process' and its understanding' or what implies to 'theory' and 'practice'. By the study of historiography one can analyze theory and practice of historical knowledge through the evaluation of a single coherent work.
- 4 Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of 'Greater Balochistan': A Study of Baloch Nationalism* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Weisbaden GMBH, 1987), chapter VII.

5 Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan* (Quetta: Gosha-e-Adab, 1977), preface.

6 Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *Inside Balochistan A Political Biography of His Highness Baiglar Baigi: Khan-e-Azam-XIII* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1975), preface.

7 See for a historical view of the Baloch nationalist movement, Taj Mohammed Breseej, *Baloch Nationalism its Origin and Development*, Ph.D. thesis submitted at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1987, chapter four.

8 The best examples of such works can be seen in the collections of Baloch Malikul Shura (the King of Poets) Mir Gul Khan Nasir's edited works such as *Balochistan Ki Kahani Shairoon Ki Zabani*; *Baloch Ishqiya Sha'ry*, *Baloch Razmiya Sha'iry* and *Parang*. In the same way, Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch edited Baloch works; see for details, 'Balochi Adab', in Abdul Shakoor Ahsan, *Pakistani Adab*, Urdu Lahore: University of the Punjab, 199; and Mir Khda Bakhsh Marri Bijarani collected *Qadeem Balochi Sha'ri*, Urdu (Quetta: Gosha-e-Adab, 1963). To make it part of elitist discourse with the Pakistani construction of Pakistani identity.

9 Mir Gul Khan Nasir translated British General Dyer's narrative 'Raiders of the Frontier' into Urdu as *Balochistan kay Sarhadi Chapa Maar*, which was published in 1979 from Quetta. In the same way Shah Muhammad Marri translated Charles Reynold Williams, *Marri Baloch Jang-i-Mazahmat*, Urdu tran. by Shah Muhammad Marri (Lahore: Takhliqat, 1992), and K. Paculine's *Baloch* into Urdu which was published in 1995 from Lahore. One can develop a long list of these translations.

10 Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *op.cit.*

11 Inayatullah Baloch, *op.cit.*, p.5.

12 Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *Baluch A Nation* (Lahore, 1947).

13 Mir Gul Khan Nasir himself a poet, got published a number of his own poetic collections as well as collection of Baloch historico-cultural ballads. His *Balochistan Ki Kahani Shairoon Ki Zabani*; *Baloch Ishqiya Sha'ry*; *Baloch Razmiya Sha'iry* and *Parang* contain very strong evidences of Baloch concept of past and history. His *Tarikh-e-Balochistan* was originally published in between 1952 and 1957. However we have used a reprint of 1979, published by Kalat Publishers, Quetta. His *Koch-o-Baloch* was published in 1969 from Quetta.

14 Gul Khan Nasir, *Koch-o-Baloch* (Quetta: Kalat Publisher, 1969).

15 Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baloch Race and Balochistan*.

<sup>16</sup> Yet, these amateur historians have tried their level hard to follow the modern academic paradigm of narration, providing references and notes, although not very perfect.

<sup>17</sup> See the title page of Urdu translation of Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch's *History of Baloch Race and Balochistan*, translated by M. Anwar Roman as ~~*Baloch Qaum Ki Tarikh*~~, Quetta, Nisa Traders, 1980. For the details of the genealogy of Rind tribe see, Henry Pottinger, *Travels in Balochistan and Sind* (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1985), reprint, 250 forward.

<sup>18</sup> See his *Inside Balochistan*.

<sup>19</sup> See his *Searchlights on Baloches and Balochistan* (Quetta: Gosha-e-Adab, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> See for details 'Gul Khan Nasir at <http://sites.google.com/site/gulkhannasir/home> and [www.gulkhannasir.tk](http://www.gulkhannasir.tk) last updated 27 February 2011, retrieved 22 July 2011.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Inam-ul-Haq Kausar's works. He is a migrant but has contributed potentially to the Baloch studies.

<sup>22</sup> See for detail of the view Ankersmits' articles cited above.

<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan*, *op.cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *op.cit.*, p. xvii

<sup>25</sup> For example Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch compares the romance of Chakar Khan and poetess Gauhar with the romance of Greek poetess Saifo. In the same way Nadir Shah is compared with Charlemagne.

<sup>26</sup> See for Anwar Roman's criticism, Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *Baluch Qaum ki Tarikh*, Translated by Prof. M. Anwar Roman (Quetta: Nissa Traders, 1980), pp. 3-5.

<sup>27</sup> Gias-ud-din Balban who ruled at the throne of Delhi from 1266 to 1286, is famous for his theory of government reflecting an impartial and mechanized content of government officials and even King.

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *op.cit.*, pp.195-97.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.197.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Almost same stand point Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch has taken up in his *Literary History of the Baluches*, two volumes, Vol. I (Quetta: Baloch Academy, 1984), Preface.

<sup>31</sup> No work of importance has provided a potent account of this system. Some imperfect structural and hierarchical details are provided by Henry Pottinger, *Travels in Balochistan and Sind*, *op.cit.*; Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri Bijarani, *Searchlights on Baloches and Balochistan*, *op.cit.*; Rai Bahadur Hato Ram, *Balochi Namah* (Lahore: Rai Sahib Munshi Ghulab Singh & Sons, 1898), reprinted as *Tarikh-e-*



- Balochistan* with Introduction by Salem Akhtar, Urdu (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1970), and M.K. Paculine, *Baloch*, Urdu Tran. by Shah Muhammad Marri, (Lahore: Takhliqat, 1995).
- <sup>32</sup> Hato Ram, *Balochi Namah* (Lahore: Rai Sahib Munshi Ghulab Singh & Sons, 1898). Copy of this first print is available in the library of School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> See for details, Malik Allah-Bakhsh's *Baloch Qaum Ki Tarikh ke Chand Parishan Daftar Auraq* (Quetta: Islamiyah Press, 1957).
- <sup>35</sup> See for detail Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *Literray History...*, *op.cit.*, pp.352-57; also see Javed Haider Syed, 'The Baloch Resistance Literature against the British Raj', *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXVIII, No.1 (2007), pp.75-94.
- <sup>36</sup> One can find a number of newspapers being published in the form of Hal.
- <sup>37</sup> Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch seems to be very prominent among the skepticist Baloch historians challenging the authenticity of Baloch traditions.
- <sup>38</sup> Longworth M. Dames, *Popular Poetry of Baloches*, Two Volumes (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1907).
- <sup>39</sup> One Baloch ballad rejects the claim of these tribes. See Bijarani, *Qadeem Balochi Sha'ri*, *op.cit.*, pp.11-13
- <sup>40</sup> Maulana Abdullah Dirmal, 'Baloch and Balochistan, *Balochi Dunya*, November, 1959, p.41; Qazi Abdul Samad Sarbazi, 'Makran aur Uska Jugraphia', *Balochi Dunya* (September 1966), p.31.
- <sup>41</sup> Maulana Nur Ahmad Faridi, *Chakar-e-Azam* (Multan: Qasar-e-Adab, 1975).
- <sup>42</sup> Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *The Great Baloch (The Life and Times of Ameer Chakar Khan Rind 1451-1551 A.D.)* (Quetta: Gosha-i-Adab, 1965).
- <sup>43</sup> Maulana Nur Ahmad Faridi, *Baloch Qaum Aur Uski Tarikh* (Multan: Qasar-e-Adab, 1968).
- <sup>44</sup> Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *op.cit.*, p.71
- <sup>45</sup> Compare the lists provided in Pottinger's *Travel*, pp.56-76 with Bijarani's *Searchlights*, pp.336-65.
- <sup>46</sup> See for details Gul Khan Nasir, *Tarikh-e-Balochistan*.
- <sup>47</sup> Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri declared that Baloch will 'live and die for their own land than to the Europeans'.
- <sup>48</sup> Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *op.cit.*, p.238.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.238
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.199

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.265-67

<sup>53</sup> Most of the other members of this school belong to Pakistani nationalists or Islamists.

<sup>54</sup> Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch has added the copies of original documents from page 219 to 337, in the form of appendies to justify his narration and arguments. However all these documents belong to the period of British interaction with the Khanate of Kalat and the documentation of period prior to the British contacts is not available with the text. See Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *op.cit.*, pp.219-337

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, Dedication page.

<sup>56</sup> M. Jaffer Hussain, 'Editorial Note – A Word to the Reader' prefixed to Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, p.vi.

<sup>57</sup> Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *op.cit.*, pp. 111-23.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.xviii.

<sup>59</sup> Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri Bijarani, *Searchlights*, pp.12-3.

<sup>60</sup> See for details Taj Mohammed Breseeg, 'Heterogeneity and The Baloch Identity' in *Hanken*, Department of Balochi, University of Balochistan, Vol.1 (2009), p.51.

<sup>61</sup> See map prefixed to Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch's *History of Baloch Race and Balochistan*; Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Balochistan*; and Malik Muhammad Saeed, *Balochistan Ma' Qabal-e-Tarikh*.

<sup>62</sup> Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of 'Greater Balochistan...'*, *op.cit.*

# Art and Architecture Education

*Pervaiz Vandal*

The purpose of formal education, since its beginning in India in the Vedic age (ca 2000BCE), was to inculcate holistic thinking about existence in its interaction with Nature and the Unknown. Human inquiry was directed towards understanding the Self with all its physical and psychological layers and the context within which it operated as an integrated, interactive system. In the axial age,<sup>1</sup> (ca 1000-300 BCE) humanity discovered values, which transcended the simple struggle for physical survival. Compassion for others, and appreciation and creation of beauty, brought pleasures that made life worth the struggle and it was this innate quality that uplifted humans to a level higher than other animals.<sup>2</sup>

In Europe, before the industrial revolution, education had no divisions of art or science disciplines; astronomers, mathematicians, physicists could be well versed, in logic, poetry, philosophy and the classical languages, Greek or Latin. Education was transferring of awareness and wisdom; in more advanced cases it meant a deeper knowledge of both the tangible and intangible natural phenomenon. With the advent of large scale production, specialized and trained labor was required. Slave labor was undoubtedly used earlier to perform unskilled work, but for the first time human beings were reduced to usable skilled manpower through a deliberate process of education and training. The purpose of education began to be linked with production.

When and how did this division take place and how does it impact today's art and architecture education in Pakistan are the critical questions addressed and since we inherited our education system from the colonial government, developments in Europe form a substantive part of the discussion.

The most pernicious effects left behind by colonialism are in the field of culture. While the direct rule may recede and the economic exploitation may take indirect forms, cultural penetrations continue under the neo-colonial thinking and take a long time to

understand and remove. Colonial policies in the field of education in India have left a deep mark so that even after seven decades of independence of the subcontinent our forms of education continue to be hostage to the developments in the West. Culturally to be modern is to be western; initiatives in the west in education are taken as the gospel in our nominally independent countries.

Centuries old wisdom was set aside by the colonial administration<sup>3</sup> and replaced by a second rate west-based education system. The characteristics of the colonial education systems, still in practice in Punjab, are: (a) dominance of the colonial language over the vernacular; (b) fragmentation of knowledge with a narrow focus to train people for specific functions in the colonial administration<sup>4</sup> (c) over-emphasis on science and technology as the path to development of the country and consequent (d) neglect of humanities and art education. Knowledge was fragmented in Europe as a result of developments and needs of its particular economic and social system and in the process produced specialized persons fit to work at a specific tasks in a factory. In India it produced the JCOs for the army, (havaldars, subedars whose main purpose was to serve the colonial objective), for civil administration it produced clerks with the ability to translate from English to the vernacular, for engineering it produced supervisors<sup>5</sup> and so on for other fields. Education and the educated were designed to serve the colonial administration and their Indian agents. Local literature, music, sculpture, painting, philosophy, architecture found no place in the colonial scheme of studies. The purpose of education was not to enlighten the Indian people but only to perpetuate the alien rule.

Thaap conference on 'Historiography of Architecture in Pakistan and the Region' was our first step towards understanding the effects of the imposed system of education on art and architecture education in Pakistan. We have now to move on to define the goals and modes of education in Pakistan and within that context the particularities of art and art education which could serve our people. Here we attempt to first understand how education was fragmented in Europe, why science and technology was given a special importance and why art education was neglected.

Specialization became the mantra in Europe, reaching its crescendo in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and that is when it was

transferred to India. In Pakistan the system was inherited and despite the evidence that Europe has begun to move towards more integrative system of studies, the rigidity of the specialized and fragmented education of the colonial period is unquestioned. It is important for us to understand the particular causes that fragmented education in order to take counter steps to bring back the wholesome education which was once the pride of our culture and benefitted our people. The purpose of education must become, what it once was, to enlighten people and to create a tolerant, knowledgeable and humane society in the context of contemporary period.

### **Beginnings of education**

As soon as a child is born, it launches its struggle for survival noisily and unambiguously. Gulping air for oxygen and seeking a new haven of security after having been ejected from the comforts of the womb, it begins to learn the ways of survival and that is the beginning of its education. It struggles for physical survival and desperately needs the feeling of security of the womb it suddenly lost. The psychologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century laid bare the multiple levels within the human brain showing that a human has not only to contend with mere physical survival but also has to have satisfactory answers to deep psychological questions regarding insecurity, fear, identity, purpose of life, etc. Education must, therefore equip a person to survive at both the physical and psychological levels.

As early humans evolved, their understanding of the world around them also deepened. At the end of the daily grind of physical survival, we can conjecture that in moments when a filling meal had been consumed by a group and as they sat around a fire or under the shade of a tree, talk turned to a recollection of the past, analysis of the present leading to speculation about the future, which could be the next day's meal, or perhaps the nature of the Unknown. The format may have been a set of reminiscences or stories or poetry or music or song. Despite being physically weaker among the group, the elderly inspired respect for having survived in the harsh environment so long, something close to a miracle at the time; they were thus the guides, leaders, the seers. These guides found the time for meditation and reflection and needed to be alone to do that. In Europe perhaps they entered

caves, with some apprentices to help them, and sought to paint and draw the daily events in an attempt to make a philosophical sense of life. In Punjab the first home of the Vedic people, Rishis took to the mountains of Kashmir to find solitude as they sought to discover the means to communicate with the Unknown. For them music in its purest form would touch the Unknown's heart. It appears that universally all humans, everywhere, developed art forms to communicate with the Unknown to implore security.

Dreams were another issue that bewildered. Dreams can be very real and in dreams one can travel far, or people, long dead and gone, may come to visit; or a past event can replay, and a future pleasurable fantasy or horror can actually happen. How to explain that? The only explanation that took hold was that within the body there was an id that, when the body was asleep, went travelling or the ids of others came to visit. A physically fit body was the attraction for it to come back, illness when it was struggling to leave and death when it left for good for some other abode. Food and psychological fitness 'kept the body and soul together'.

Around the fire or under the tree there were also pleasures and celebrations. Physical prowess, athletic performance, dance, music, story-telling, beauty of conversation, song, an artifact, copulation and procreation, brought a new zeal to survive and live for another day. It is the pleasures that, despite difficulties, sustained the desire to live. Art was born of such pleasures and fears; it was a celebration or a supplication.

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* in its section of Art, states, 'The definition of art is controversial in contemporary philosophy. Whether art can be defined has also been a matter of controversy. The philosophical usefulness of a definition of art has also been debated'. With a subject so open to different interpretations a valid question is can a person be educated to be an artist or if art is a God-given talent, can the genetic make-up of a person be molded and changed.

### **Education in the pre-industrial era**

India probably has the oldest tradition of systematic education. Anant Sadashiv Altekan<sup>6</sup> gives a fairly detailed description of the different rituals required in the Vedic Period to be performed as

the child progressed from one stage of education to another. Various requirements are mentioned for those seeking to learn the mantras for sacrifices, military service, and for professionals, especially mentioned are the carpenters, musicians and snake charmers. Sacrifice and mantras linked all education like a thread.

The first guru is stated to be the father, for he is the first guide (in the patriarchal society the mother is not mentioned). Gurus imparted their expertise and knowledge to those around them, students sought out the teacher but it is clearly stated that it is also the duty of the teacher to seek out students so none remains uninitiated. The general public was aware and educated in the basics and all people in their leisure enjoyed art from storytelling or play acting, dance, acrobatics and jugglery etc. Later a rigid class structure set-in and prohibited the lower classes to learn any more than they needed.

Later during the medieval period schools in India (could call them *madrassas*), although religiously oriented, taught the three basic re-reading writing and arithmetic. A higher level of such education took place in monasteries or other reclusive places where groups could concentrate on higher planes. Education in the pre-industrial age was a coming together of the teacher and taught (*ustad-shagird* or *guru-chela*) without time and cost-defined constrains. The *guru* decided when his *chela* was ready to set out on his own.<sup>7</sup> The upkeep and sustenance of scholars and teacher in this early period was the responsibility of the society. Integration of scholarship and society was underlined daily as students made the round of the village or town to beg for their daily sustenance. Humility was the first sign of a scholar.

The most highly developed scholarship before the industrial age belongs to the Arabs with great centers in Syria and Spain. From 750 to 1100 CE, over a period of 350 years, remarkable breakthroughs were made in understanding the natural phenomena. It was found that Nature obeyed laws and its behavior could be predicted. The Unknown was now to be less feared. Scholars, for example Al Kindi, Al Razi, Ibn Rushd, Ibne Sina and Omar Khayyam, were philosophers and generalists, with discoveries and insights in more than one field. They were sensitive esthetes with sharp observation capabilities and they integrated in their person the qualities of the present day scientist and artist. Knowledge was integrated.

### **Nation-state, war and education**

At the end of first millennium, knowledge and training took a substantial leap and a sharp turn in Europe, to meet demands of increasing production. In 1095CE, Pope Urban II launched unprovoked aggression, the Crusades, giving religious sanction to loot and murder, in direct contrast to the earlier pacifist teachings of the Christ. For two centuries Europe fought the Muslims with its new ideology<sup>8</sup> of war in pursuit of commercial and political interests; an identity it still has. By the end of the Crusades (ca1300), Europe had gained further knowledge and technology through interaction with the Arab Muslims that became crucial to its future development. Henceforth an unending state of war<sup>9</sup> prevailed in Europe; it mobilized society, harnessed resources, developed technology and its teaching and brought immense profits to a new class of merchants and industrialist. It also killed a very large number of common people. Europe split into small city states and then regrouped on a new basis of ethnicity leading to the nation states of today. Creativity was harnessed in service of development of science and technology for the nation. The power structure of society changed and landed gentry had to share power with the urban traders and manufactures.<sup>10</sup>

Education which had been confined to Church institutions in service of God underwent a dramatic change to meet the new challenges of the capitalist system and began to be judged for its utility in the process of wealth accumulation. An increasing demand for trained persons led to a strong nexus between military, industry, technical institutes and training centers. Great strides were made in different sciences like chemistry, physics, metallurgy leading to new designs of killing machines and a host of other inventions that transformed society. Accumulation of wealth snowballed leading to greater and greater effort by scholars to develop processes that created more wealth. 'Voyages of Discovery' with the intention of outright usurpation were launched by European nations to explore and exploit all resources of the captured lands. Knowledge and education provided the basis for the rapid advances in naval and land warfare.

### **Education fragmented-age of specialization**

As compared to the earlier times education was now more focused on the abilities and techniques required to facilitate the production



processes. An efficient education system with a defined curriculum, taught in time-defined packages, with grading and testing to assess employability of students was developed. Such an approach lends itself to a systematic break-up of education into modules, to be taught in a given time, students tested and evaluated and thus graded like industrial goods to be used according to the demand of the customer. Holistic education of the Renaissance was replaced with a specialized, short term, education. Knowledge was split into useful and profits generating sciences and the not so useful arts; 'age of specialization' was born. Among the many, a small number who could afford longer periods of education went onto further specialize and lead the developments in science.

Art fell by the way side. What use was art, philosophy, history (history was now used only for glorification of nations and was reinvented many a time to justify ones' ancestry, or to claim superiority)? All arts were reduced to being useful only to the extent they served the 'Nation'. Painting, music, drama and above all architecture that most propagandist of arts, were pressed into service to glorify and justify jingoism. Art had little value, it could not be mass produced and profits were uncertain. It was neglected or at best thought only as a play-activity for the rich; it was reduced to making portraits and busts of the rich pretending to be Roman men and women; architecture became simple reproduction of the styles of the classical past. This was in essence the cause of the 'battle of styles' of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century where debates on architecture were devoted to the appropriateness of the style of architecture chosen for a particular building. Architects adopted a particular style be it 'Italian Renaissance', 'French Gothic' or 'English Medieval' according to their predilections or the whims of the clients.<sup>11</sup> For the ordinary citizen quality of art and art education ceased to have much relevance.

### **Art education**

Education managers in the different countries attempted to bring the culture of fragmented education to the teaching of arts also. Value, cost, benefit, specialization, course-time etc., became the key words. The success of science and engineering in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, forced architects and artists to rethink their

professional education into 'scientific' mold at the expense of the 'artistic'. The bias to learn from science culminated in the declaration by Sullivan that 'Form follows Function, or Corbusier that 'a house is a machine to live in'. In the field of arts specialization was introduced and painting, sculpture, music, dance etc. put up walls behind which they insisted on different being identities. Recruitment and promotion policies for teachers fostered greater number of departments, and specialized degrees from the West became the symbol of quality; however the basic question for art teachers, viz. how to facilitate idea-generation among art students was pushed to the back.

This was understandable at the time when specialization was key to economic development but today's sciences and societies, speaking globally, are moving toward integration and convergence of knowledge where multi-disciplinary approaches are the key to success. Art and architecture education in Pakistan has to recapture the holistic approach in keeping with the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to contribute to the society as a whole and benefit all the people.

### **Art and the unknown or where do ideas come from? – *The source eludes.***

In a discussion on art education the key question is that of the source of inspiration. Since the Greeks, people, and even more, the artists, have said that inspiration, ideas, come from the Unknown. Shelley the philosopher among the Romantics, said that the artist (poet) has to be attuned to the waves of divinity that are in the air to pluck ideas. Mirza Ghalib says the same and goes a step further to claim that the angels speak to him through his pen:

*Aatey hai ghaib se ye mazameen khial mein*

*Ghalib, sareer e khama nawa i sarosh hai*

It is, however, evident that art, ability to ponder and deliberate over beauty, and to take time to enjoy it, is a uniquely human endeavor, and it springs from the creative impulse that only they seem to possess. The further process of being able to create objects of beauty which may or may not be of any consumptive or ritualistic use comes from firstly, the observation of nature and its Unknowable forces and second the need to communicate with Nature and to placate the Unknown. During the Renaissance there was a shift of focus from gods to humans and

arts began to widen their audience with the human being in center. In the present day the audience must encompass all the society, the advantaged and the disadvantaged.

Every art has a technical side in which persons can be trained using the processes developed for science education; the qualitative side, the esthetic side; but the question of beauty is the aspect that cannot be 'taught' under the same processes. However, the integrity of sciences and arts has to be rediscovered. All scientific discoveries and breakthroughs also result from that flash of 'idea', the artistic insight; creativity can and should be fostered among all students, scientists and artists.

Human appreciation of art is innate and not socially constructed... [and]... the origin of speech and the human mind are shown to have emerged simultaneously as the bifurcation from percept to concept.<sup>6, 12)</sup>

Human Mind is that element, part, substance or process that reasons, thinks, feels, wills, perceives, judges, etc. Thereby Humans developed the ability to move from concrete percept-based-thought to abstract concept-based-thought. Researches in cognition, its psychology and philosophy, show that the mind has the ability to pull together different strands of knowledge in an integrative process to make a bouquet out of a variety of flowers. This is also called the Neural Networks. Cognition processes the information received from the five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting) with the addition of reading books which is a summary of other people's experience. To facilitate the mind it is imperative that a person have the widest possible experiences of all segments of the society but then to help the integrative process it is necessary to verbalize the cognition, recollect and form a value judgment. Verbalizing and writing the thoughts in the mind, clarifies and sharpens them and this can be called 'reading the mind'. In the correlation of language and mind this is a very important process which helps the mind to further vault to higher concepts and understanding through self-analyses and self-criticism.

Discounting the earlier concepts of *divine* facilitation in the creation of beauty a little introspection reveals that cognition

(experience) and its verbalization (writing about it) are the two keys to education. In short:

- Wholesome human knowledge means a UNITY of arts and sciences.
- An educated mind works with discipline and rigor and also has the ability to soar with intuition and the flight of imagination.
- The objective of all teaching institutions should be to produce such educated minds with programs that discipline the body and free the soul.
- All arts and intuitions spring from the human mind and respond to its values of esthetics.
- A well-rounded education, with multi-discipline universities providing the ambience and facilities, enhances the quality of life for all.

### **Future of art education in the context of a university**

It so happens that we, all those who have participated in Thaap functions, have a particular background of arts and architecture. Therefore, under the overall strategy of integration of knowledge we are best equipped to start with the field that we know best i.e. art education. Thaap is a forum where we hope to invite teachers of arts and architecture to discuss, discover and formulate principles in the context of an overall system of education that promotes creativity among students. We start with art education not because we want to commit the same mistake of fragmentation by not including scientists etc. but because this is our entry point; we have worked with artists and architects and we know them best. As we move along the integrationist process our circle could grow to include other disciplines as well and that will make us richer and wiser. The strategy must remain of developing a vision of integrated education.

In Pakistan it is almost a cliché to say that school education needs to be drastically reformed. It is fragmented and rote based. The reality is that the majority of university intake comes through that channel with students who are weak in languages, with little general knowledge and only aware of narrow segments of disciplines that they might have studied. Students coming from the 'English-medium' schools have an advantage of better facilities and more of them pass the entry requirements especially in the arts

departments. This is another fact of our fragmented and class ridden society and for the present we cannot impact it.

With these difficulties in mind we must redouble our efforts to delineate the way where we can contribute. In Lahore there are a number of institutions teaching arts and architecture and faculty from all of them have attended Thaap meetings. We can make further efforts to invite the entire faculty to join us in our deliberation. We have had highly rewarding talks by members of the faculty and we must continue these. The Thaap conference has further given depth to the deliberations and we can count upon a yet wider circle to join us.

To set the ball rolling, the following ideas are presented for the structure of an integrated arts institution. Similar ideas could be developed for other fields such as social sciences and other sciences with an integrationist approach.

Almost all institutions in Lahore and Karachi have widened their departments of art and architecture by bringing related disciplines within the fold. The trend is clearly visible and we are all moving forward. Our discussion will further clarify the path and the overall strategy.

It is suggested that there be a faculty of arts, architecture and culture within the context of a multi-disciplinary university, which will have as many fields of arts as resources allow. This would be a growing process. All departments within the faculty will be multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, rather than linear, will lead to higher degrees. The first year (foundation year) will be common for the whole faculty in which emphasis would be on developing the ability to use the five senses (observation) with a wide reading list, i.e. to develop cognition. Also students would be required to verbalize experiences in written form for self-evaluation and self-criticism. The objective is to make students conscious of their mind, to intelligently communicate with it and thus to refine its values. It is understood that once the process is mastered it becomes a life-long ever-improving exercise. Three fields are identified and specific suggestions are made:

### **Teaching of history**

The primary purpose of study of history is to understand ourselves and our culture; where have we come from and whither are we

going? Instead of starting from prehistoric time and come to present we find it is more understandable if we start with study of our present state, its glory or predicament, and then work backwards in time and trace the historic evolution. This could apply to our person or our styles of architecture (or the absence of any coherent style), urban growth and in fact any phenomenon. Thus we can get rid of European – centric bias in scholarship and we focus on our own present and its evolution from the past. There is no limit how far in the past we can go and in the process study other cultures wherever it widens our horizons.

### **Teaching of architecture design**

Art education should be firmly dedicated to holistic thinking about its conceptual basis. The question of form, shape and design, thus architecture, must flow from the mind of the architect always addressing the issues of tradition, function, energy efficiency, climate control, structural stability and any other factor that impinges on his concepts of the solutions to the problem. The foremost point that all architects must learn is the cultural context of the society, site and space that they operate in, and that buildings are not located or built in vacuum. The question of tradition, functional appropriateness, cultural relevance, energy efficiency, comfort and climate control must be an integral part of all designs. In the teaching institution it must be the basis of all work from the initial design to the final theses. Every assignment or project in the subject of architectural design will incorporate these elements at the simple to the complex level so that these issues become an integral part of the student's (future architect) thinking.

### **Teaching of technologies**

Technologies will be taught in correlation with the complexity of the design that students are doing and not in isolation. Thus for example air conditioning/ structure/ public health will not be taught in the abstract but in direct relation to the design at hand and therefore at different levels of complexity. Fundamental information regarding material, their behavior and availability and suitability will be taught as in science-mode.

## Conclusion

During my World Bank days I annoyed a subject specialist on education by advocating a change in the methodologies that were being implemented. 'Why do you want to reinvent the wheel?' he fumed, 'We have tried and tested this in schools in US and it works. Why don't you just use the same?' My answer was that that was precisely the problem; we are trying to fit wheels invented by West on our cart forgetting that our carts are not the same. 'We are happy to learn from your wheel' I said, 'but we have to develop a design that suits our particular cart' – and that is precisely the objective of THAAP. With windows opening toward all directions, West, East, North, South, and a willingness to learn from all, we have to look at own particularities to set our house in order. We are focusing on Art and Architecture Education, as a start, for we are equipped to contribute to the cultural values in this region and our immediate audience is the teachers of the subjects. This audience will widen to include other scientific disciplines. Together, old and young, we propose to learn from each other and develop a consensus on our objectives and methods and coordinate and cooperate in the implementation so that we can refine them further. As we achieve success in one particular field the process can be expanded and extended. This would be a continuous and an unending endeavor'.

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## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformations: the World in the Time of Buddha, Socrates, Confucius and Jeremiah* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> Humans are the only specie who can consciously commit suicide, therefore they have the option to continue living consciously.
- <sup>3</sup> See Lord Macaulay's famous 'Minute on Education' approved by the Governor General in March, 1835.
- <sup>4</sup> Markus Daechsel writes in 'Deurbanizing the City: Colonial Cognition and the People of Lahore' an essay in *People on the Move*, Talbot & Thandi (eds.) (Oxford University Press, 2004), 'Even the large education sector in the city can be linked to the interests of colonization because it was primarily designed to produce the educated manpower needed for the Imperial Administration'; for today read civil service'.

- <sup>5</sup> Higher education in science and technology was denied to the natives. See Pervaiz Vandal's *The Raj, Lahore and Bhai Ram Singh*, for details.
- <sup>6</sup> Anant Sadashiv, Altekan, *Education in Ancient India* (Delhi: Isha Books, first published, 1934, reprint 2009), gives details of Vedic Period education.
- <sup>7</sup> We see this reflected in the early years of Mayo School of Arts when no time limit was prescribed for the students to leave the school.
- <sup>8</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Holy War, Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001).
- <sup>9</sup> 1099-1298 Crusades; 1208-1227 Conquest of Estonia; 1209-1229 Albigensian Crusade; 1220-1264 The Age of the Sturlungs; 1282-1302 War of the Sicilian Vespers; 1296-1357 Wars of Scottish Independence; 1337-1453 Hundred Years' War; 1419-1434 Hussite Wars; 1455-1487 Wars of the Roses; 1499 Swabian War; 1522-1559 Habsburg-Valois Wars; 1558-1583 Livonian War; 1562-1598 French Wars of Religion; 1568-1648 Eighty Years' War; 1580-1583 War of the Portuguese Succession; 1585-1604 Anglo-Spanish War; 1594-1603 Nine Years War (Ireland); 1618-1648 Thirty Years' War; 1640-1688 Portuguese Restoration War, available at: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)., continuing to the present day.
- <sup>10</sup> Sir Isaac Newton, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, was working for the Admiralty when he discovered and formulated the laws of motion and gravitation and developed the mathematics (calculus) to analyze the same. This directly contributed to better aiming devices for guns which gave the edge to British Navy and Army.
- <sup>11</sup> To give two examples among many, the style of architecture of the British House of Parliament was changed to the Gothic in deference to the wishes of the new prime minister who did not like the previous style and the President's House in Islamabad was 'modernized' by Edward Stone by removing the dome at the suggestion of the new Chairman CDA who did not quite like the 'Islamic' version as propounded by the previous chairman.
- <sup>12</sup> Denis Dutton, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure and Human Evolution* (Bloomsbury Press, 2009).



# Re-Constructing Pakistan Press History: Some Methodological Requisites

*Sharif al Mujahid*

## Abstract

*historical methodology*

The present paper seeks to discuss in some detail the methodological problems posed in attempting to unread the historical antecedents of the Pakistan press. Pakistan being a 'divided nation', do we go in for a regional or a total-context approach. That is, do we begin with the 1840s when the first newspapers in the territories that became Pakistan in 1947 were launched or with the 1780 when the first newspapers in the subcontinent came to be founded? This question has a bearing beyond mere press history – for instance, on the writing of history itself in Pakistan. The author opts in for the latter approach, and cites precedents from the literature and gives reasons, buttressed by ground realities of the period encompassed, for his choice. The factors in the continuity of specific traditions and ideological orientation to argue why and how the Pakistan press owes its origins and early development to the Indian Muslim (or Muslim League oriented) press in the 1940s, and how even the press development prior to 1947 in the 'Pakistan' areas can be understood only in the total context of subcontinental history. The author seeks to clinch the argument by a reference to the impact of East Pakistani developments on Pakistan's political and press history during the united Pakistan (1947-1971) period, and even after. Since the rise of Gibbon, Toynbee, Spengler, Wells and Collingwood, the regional and the inward-looking ethnocentric approach in history has been doomed for all time to come, the author concludes.

A definitive study of the Pakistan press is still awaited. Such a study, if and when it is attempted, would have to be made on several dimensions. Briefly stated, it would have to treat the beginning, development, trends and characteristics of the Pakistan press in terms of the historical, political, socio-cultural and economic variables impinging upon them. Whereas the traditional approach has been to emphasize the historical and political dimensions, the trends since the middle 1960s has been towards a sociological approach. Yet, as Melvin de Fleur points out, the study

of the press in terms of societal variables comes after not before, the delineation of the historical development.<sup>1</sup> This paper seeks to discuss the problem of delineating that development.

Pakistan being a 'divided-nation',<sup>2</sup> having been separated from the Indian mainland in 1947, the unravelling of the historical antecedents of the Pakistan press presents certain methodological problems. The basic question is: how far do we go in both time and space in quest of the historical roots of the Pakistan press? Do we begin with the middle 1840s when the first newspapers in the territories that became Pakistan in 1947 were launched? Or, do we begin with the 1780s when the first newspapers made their debut in the subcontinent? These twin questions are important since they involve much more than mere dates. The former course would mean treating the press in the 'Pakistan' areas as a distinct entity on its own even when it was very much an integral part of a political, economic and administrative unit, readily susceptible to multifarious variable, and influences impinging upon it while the latter would call for studying it in the total context – that is, a larger perspective and as an integral part of sub-continental journalism – for the period prior to 1947.

Two major problems instrumentalize the raising of this question. First, its significance encompasses much beyond press history; it has as well important bearing on the writing of history as such. Till 1971, some historians advocated a narrow 'geographical' framework encompassing only the then Pakistan areas for the pre-1947 period.<sup>3</sup> Some others today even advocate a further narrow framework: confining it to the present, post-1971 Pakistan areas.<sup>4</sup>

Second, some press historians have flaunted a regional approach. This approach may be valid while doing a press history of a comparatively isolated region like the NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa),<sup>5</sup> which, though a constituent part of a larger administrative unit at one time or another, has yet remained intact region-wise in the modern period; but not in the case of a region like Punjab (Pakistan) which underwent bisection in 1947. The same principle applies to Pakistan itself.

In his major work, *Tarikh-i-Sahafat Hind-o-Pakistan* (rev. edn., 1989), and several articles, Abdus Salam Khurshid, the most notable Pakistani press historian, has adopted the larger, sub-

continental approach; but when he comes to attempting a history of the Pakistan press,<sup>6</sup> he goes in for a regional approach. He includes only those newspapers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, published in the areas that upon partition became Pakistan, while scrupulously he ignoring Muslim papers published elsewhere in the subcontinent. Equally important, ignores the emergence of a distinct Muslim press in the 1940s. And this narrow geographical framework is obviously inappropriate and that on several counts.

First, for some ninety years till 1947 the entire subcontinent was one unit – held together not only geographically politically, administratively, but also buttressed irrevocably by its unified systems of judiciary, education, press, economy and communication networks. Moreover, for varying periods during the ninety years of British imperial rule in India (1858-1947), four of the five provinces of united Pakistan – viz., East Pakistan, Sind, Punjab, and NWFP – had formed integral parts of larger provincial or administrative units like those of Bengal and Bombay presidencies and Delhi and the Punjab. Punjab and the NWFP were set up as separate provincial units in 1901; Sind was detached from Bombay Presidency and set up as a separate province in 1936; and the Bengal and Punjab were bifurcated in 1947, to create Punjab (Pakistan) and East Bengal/East Pakistan, the residue going to India. Hence, even within a geographical framework, the press in the ‘Pakistan’ areas in the pre-1947 period could not be treated on a discrete plane. Rather, it had to be studied as an integral part of the press in the erstwhile administrative units, and, moreover, in the overall context of subcontinental journalism.

Interestingly, the literature lends support for this approach. In his study of *The Government of Germany* (1972), John H. Hertz traces the evolution of the German political heritage briefly from the time of the Holy Roman Empire and in some detail from the days of the German Empire (1871 f.),<sup>7</sup> although neither the Holy Roman Empire nor the German Empire (1871-1918), nor even Germany between the two world wars (1918-39), was conterminous with the West German boundaries in the 1970s. The overriding consideration for this approach was: (i) that the core German political traditions took root during these periods; and (ii) that their evolution is also marked by continuity. Hence, these

periods are included in Hertz's survey of the German political heritage to which West Germany is heir to. Likewise, the contributors to *Divided Nations in a Divided World* (1974)<sup>8</sup> trace the socio-cultural and politico-psychological developments in the erstwhile undivided countries to explore the roots of the 'divided nations'.

In the geographical context, the same sort of relationship had existed between the post-1947 Pakistan press and the subcontinental press as that between political traditions in West Germany and those in the German Empire, or as that between the divided nations' and the mother countries. Common to all the three situations is the characteristic of *continuity*; it is *the* key variable which necessitates treatment of an issue or a tradition in a total context.

Second, the growth and development of the press in India, as elsewhere, were inextricably linked up with the crystallization of political parties and political demands. Despite the emergence of the Indian National Congress as the largest and most organized political party, the parties in the subcontinent were more or less organized along communal lines. In consequence, party journalism in India also came to be organized along these lines<sup>9</sup> – chiefly, Hindu and Muslim. There was also a small Sikh press, centred in the Punjab, and the extremely influential Anglo-Indian press encompassing the entire subcontinent. (This press, which represented and promoted the imperial cause, was to shrink in size, circulation, pervasiveness and influence only towards the close of the British raj).

By the 1920s the development of the Indian press along communal lines led to the emergence of a large, well-organized and well knit Congress-oriented (but largely Hindu) 'nationalist' press, a considerably smaller, rather poorly organized but equally strident Muslim press, and a tiny but compact Sikh press. By the middle 1940s, the Muslim press, though still small in size, became well-organized, compact, coherent and influential enough to warrant notice by, even, Indian press historians.<sup>10</sup> This distinct Muslim press, known as the (Muslim) League-oriented press, would eventually become the immediate progenitor of the Pakistan press.

Thus, unless the development of party journalism along communal lines is duly recognized and unless the emergence of a distinct Muslim press encompassing the entire subcontinent is taken cognizance of, the historical antecedents of the Pakistan press cannot possibly be genuinely located and identified. A narrow 'geographical' framework would obviously preclude the inclusion of the rise of party journalism and of a distinct Muslim press within the purview of the historical evolution of the Pakistan press. Hence, for the purpose of tracing out the development of the Pakistan press on the historical dimension, the narrow 'geographical' framework is inadequate and defective, to say the least.<sup>11</sup>

Third, since the subcontinent was partitioned along communal lines, the Muslim press as a whole, no matter where some of its constituents were located geographically, becomes the progenitor of the newly emerging Pakistan press even as the post-1947 Indian press became heir to the 'nationalist' press. This viewpoint is further buttressed by two other critical factors. First, the Muslim press owed its birth and development to movements essentially Muslim in character. The rise of the Aligarh movement (1870s), the Urdu Defence Association (1900), the demand for separate electorates and the founding of the Muslim League (1906), the pan-Islamic and Khilafat movements (1910s and early 1920s), the controversy over the Nehru Report (1928), the emergence of the comprehensive All-Parties Muslim Conference (1929) and the formulation of the Fourteen Points (1929), the reorganization of the Muslim League (1937-40), and the launching of the Pakistan Movement (1940) led to the founding of a great many Muslim papers and the strengthening of existing ones.<sup>12</sup> These movements also led to the widening of the chasm between the Hindu-owned and the growing Muslim-owned segments of the Indian press, scattered throughout the subcontinent. More important, the non-'Pakistan' areas housed more numerous and more influential Muslim papers than did the 'Pakistan' areas. During the middle 1940s, when almost the entire Muslim press in the subcontinent supported the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan, all the major Muslim papers except two were housed in the non-'Pakistan' areas. Hence the legacy of the Pakistan press encompassed the entire subcontinental Muslim press, and certainly

not the 'mixed' bag of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Anglo-Indian papers published in the territories that became Pakistan.

On the ideological plane as well, this legacy was all-India in character. Pakistan was conceived as the geographical expression of an all-pervasive, pan-Indian Muslim nationalism, which inspired the demand for a separate, sovereign Muslim state. True: this nationalism was also promoted by such crucial factors as language, culture, history, economics, and the fortuitous existence of a Muslim majority in certain well-defined areas, but its basis was essentially a common civilizational legacy, animated by a religious sentiment. Between El-Hamza<sup>13</sup> and Durrani,<sup>14</sup> the propagonists respectively of the territorial and the ideological base of the Pakistan demand,<sup>15</sup> Jinnah and the Muslim consensus went in for the latter. For instance, Jinnah rejected Gandhi's offer to hold 'regional referendums in the Pakistani areas to ascertain the wishes of *all* the people', and asserted that 'we claim the right of self-determination as a nation and *not* as a territorial unit', saying that 'it would be the self-determination of the Mussalmans and that they *alone* are entitled to exercise that right'.<sup>16</sup> Hence the Muslim press in the subcontinent, which espoused the cause of Muslim nationalism, must need be treated as an integral unit on the larger canvas of subcontinental journalism.

Fourth, press development cannot possibly be divorced from the medium in which the newspapers are published. In the subcontinent, the three more important languages in which the newspapers were published were English, Urdu and Bengali. Papers in these languages were first published outside the territories of united Pakistan (1947-71). After the 1857 rebellion which caused a serious setback to Urdu journalism in northern India, it found a new home in the Punjab where it was promoted and patronised by the Hindus and Sikhs as well; the largest circulated Hindu and Sikh papers (e.g., *Milap* and *Ajit* respectively) were published in Urdu. Punjab apart, throughout north-western India ('West Pakistan'), the press was chiefly in the Urdu medium. Hence, even in respect of the medium dimension, the press in the 'Pakistan' areas ought to be studied in the context of the Urdu press development in the rest of the subcontinent.

Fifth, some of the more important Hindu and Sikh papers from the 'Pakistan' areas such as *The Tribune*, *Pratap*, *Milap* and

Ajit shifted themselves to (what is now) India upon partition, while some Muslim papers (e.g., *Dawn*, *Jang*, *Anjam*, *Morning News*, and *Assam Herald*) migrated to Pakistan. This two-way migration of papers points further to the existence of an 'Indian' (i.e., nationalist)-oriented and a 'Pakistan'-oriented press in the subcontinent. Their intellectual and spiritual links were with the two ideologies which, though represented by post-1947 India and Pakistan, transcended their geographical boundaries in the pre-partition era.

Integral to, but more important than, this physical shift was the socio-cultural, political and economic milieu in which the 'nationalist' and the Muslim press developed. They had, of course, shared some basic problems, traditions, and influences with each other and with the Anglo-Indian press, but the milieu in which they had developed was different. This difference in their respective historical development is critical for at least two important reasons: (i) it had perhaps the greatest impact during the formative phase of (post-1947) Indian and Pakistan journalism; and (ii) it also accounts partly for the way they have developed since 1947. (The other sources of their divergence in their respective development may be traced to their differentiation on the indices of modernization in the Lerner model.)<sup>17</sup>

An extraterritorial approach is neither novel nor new: it has precedents, at least, in the cultural field. The North Americans trace back their cultural heritage to the West European civilization, the West European nations to Greece and Rome, the Pakistanis to the medieval Islamic (or Perso-Arab) civilization in the Middle East, and the India, among others, to Moenjo Daro and Harappa, Gandhara and Taxila, which are now located in Pakistan. The press, being a socio-cultural institution, must need, therefore, be studied, besides the geographical matrix, in the socio-cultural context as well.

To what incongruities an approach based purely on the present or the pre-Bangladesh geographical dimensions of the country may lead can be seen in Khurshid's account. In his discussion of pre-1947 journalism he includes non-Muslim papers like *Koh-i-Noor* (Lahore), *The Lahore Chronicle*, *The Tribune* (Lahore) and *Sind Observer* (Karachi) while excluding significant Muslim papers like *Comrade* (Calcutta/Delhi, 1911-14), *Al-Hilal*

(Calcutta, 1912-14), *Al Balagh* (Calcutta), *Musalman* (Calcutta), *Hamdam* (Lucknow, 1912-47), *Asr-i-Jadid* (Calcutta, 1919-48), *Star of India* (Calcutta, 1942-48), *Dawn* (Delhi, 1941-48), *Manshoor* (Delhi, 1937-47), and *Jang* (Delhi, 1941-47). It is true that the former set of (non-Muslim) papers did have an impact on the growth and development, tone and tenor of their Muslim contemporaries; it is also conceded that a history of the Muslim press or a delineation of the Muslim papers at the time cannot be chronicled in the total context without a reference to their non-Muslim contemporaries, and their impact on them (Khurshid's account, being descriptive rather than analytical, fails to bring out the interaction between the Muslim and non-Muslim papers, and their impact on one another.) What, however, is inexplicable is the exclusion of the second set of (Muslim) papers – that is, the Muslim contemporaries in the non-‘Pakistan’ areas – which were organically related to the Muslim papers in the ‘Pakistan’ areas. For one thing, the Muslim papers in the non-‘Pakistan’ areas had influenced the Pakistani papers the most; for another, some of them, having migrated to Pakistan, had also joined with the newly launched ones like *The Pakistan Times* (f. 1947) and *Naw-i-Waqt* (f. 1940) to become the nucleus of the newly emerging Pakistan press in the nation's early years. And because of this exclusion, the linkage between Khurshid's account of the historical development of the Muslim press in the ‘Pakistan’ areas in the pre-partition period and that of its development in the post-partition era is rather incidental and tenuous.

There are also precedents for such an approach in the literature. Bleyer<sup>18</sup> begins his history of the American journalism, not with the appearance of the first newspaper in colonial America but with the appearance of the ‘corantos,’ or primitive newspapers, in early seventeenth century. Following him and others, Emery and Smith trace ‘the heritage of the American press’ to the earliest publications in England and in western Europe.<sup>19</sup> They also devote an entire chapter to delineating the development of the press in these areas during the seventeenth century. This they do because, as they put it,

- (i) the colonial newspaper was so closely patterned after the British product that to understand the function of the press at



that time, it is necessary to explain a little about the English influence;<sup>20</sup>

- (ii) the concept of a free press [which] was eventually to prevail in the United States was first developed in England, and thus the American debt to English press traditions is incalculable.<sup>21</sup>

In a like vein, it may be argued that (i) the Pakistan-oriented newspapers in the 'Pakistan' areas during the pre-1947 period were organically related to other Pakistan-oriented or Muslim papers in the non-'Pakistan' areas; and that (ii) their more specific traditions represented an indivisible whole and, hence, the debt of the Pakistan press to Muslim press traditions is incalculable.

The point that needs be stressed here is the critical problem of linkage with our past. Can we afford to delink ourselves to our total heritage in the subcontinent in the pre-partition era? Could we reconstruct or even regionalize the history of the 'New Pakistan' territories without reference to our heritage, both in the medieval and modern periods? Professor A. H. Dani thinks otherwise:

The story of its [Pakistan] past is inextricably linked up with the cross-current of history that underlay the events in South Asia. Even for the Muslims who built up a mighty empire in this part of the world, their main centre of activity was Delhi and Agra. This great mediaeval epoch cannot be separated from the heritage of Pakistan.<sup>22</sup>

Professor K. K. Aziz also comes to the same conclusion: At first sight many aspects of our history may appear too remote to be relevant to us today. But is that true? Most people would agree with the statement that the history of Pakistan begins with the advent of the Muslims in India.<sup>23</sup>

With both these authorities, the overriding consideration seems to be that each historical event has a perspective, and it can and must be analyzed and interpreted in the context of that perspective alone.

Now, if the mediaeval epoch is not so remote, how much more true is that of the modern period? By the same token, can the history of the regions constituting either united Pakistan (1947-71) or post-Bangladesh 'new Pakistan' be separated from that of the

rest of the subcontinent? The Mujahidin movement (1818-63), the 1857 rebellion, the Aligarh, Khilafat and the Pakistan movements were largely of an all-India character. Although in course of time they affected the Pakistan regions as much as they did the rest of subcontinent, their origins, for the most part, lay outside the 'new Pakistan' territories.<sup>24</sup> So was the location of papers that sustained them and contributed significantly to their success.<sup>25</sup> To be more specific, can we talk, for instance, of Justice Shah Din and the Muslim efforts in the educational field in the Punjab without a reference to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the Aligarh school, and the Mohammedan Educational Conference? By the same token, can we talk of Hasan Effendi and the Muslim efforts at educating Muslim Sind without reference to Sayyid Ameer Ali and the Calcutta-based Central National Mohammadan Association? Even the demand for the separation of Sind and for the extension of constitutional reforms to the NWFP and Balochistan were first voiced outside these regions; they were also later put forward for acceptance at the All-Parties National Convention (1928) and the Round Table Conference (1930-32) in the name of Muslim India. At another level, several writers have opined that without Aligarh, there would have been no Pakistan.<sup>26</sup> Nor would have the Muslim League won the general elections of 1945-46 but for the energetic efforts of, among others, the Aligarh students.<sup>27</sup>

The Muslim press in the 'Pakistan' regions in the pre-Pakistan period was likewise affected the most by the movements outside the region, and the tone and tenor set by them. For instance, out of the three most outstanding Muslim journalists whose tradition we often invoke – viz., Maulana Muhammad Ali, Abul Kalam Azad and Zafar Ali Khan – the first two did not belong to the 'Pakistan' regions, and the third one started his career outside the region. That is why most writers trace the historical development of the Pakistani press to the Muslim press in India.<sup>28</sup> Hence our contention that the history of the Pakistani press can be understood only in the total context of wider history.

The problem raised in this paper has relevance even for the post-partition period in view of the construction of the 'new Pakistan' boundaries to those of erstwhile West Pakistan. Briefly stated, the point at issue is this: would we or would we not include the East Pakistan-based press in an account of the historical

development of the Pakistani press during the united Pakistan period – i.e., from 1947 to 1971? Can we afford, for instance, to ignore the influence of the political developments in East Pakistan or of East Pakistan-based political parties on the political development in West Pakistan during this period? By the same token, can we study the press in West Pakistan during the period but in the wider context of press development in both East and West Pakistan.

Actually, not to speak of the eastern press, even the natural resources and products of the East, its political temper and even the handy audience, however limited, it provided, had an impact on press development in the West. For instance, take the Dacca High Court's judgment in *The Dacca Times* case in August 1963, which upheld the right of a paper to create public opinion by healthy and even forceful criticism of the government.<sup>29</sup> Was the impact of this ruling confined to East Pakistan alone? Or could a West Pakistan paper invoke it to exercise greater freedom in its comments or defend its conduct in case of prosecution?

At another level, the newsprint shortage in the post-Bangladesh period, due to the non-availability of the Khulna (East Pakistan) newsprint, the main source of supply since 1960, had adversely affected press development in 'new Pakistan', both economically and politically. Economically, this non-availability had languished the western papers, slicing their size by about fifty per cent, and increased their production costs. Politically, it had made them dependent upon government for newsprint allocation, providing yet another lever for the governmental control of the press. This shows how even a product could have far reaching consequences on the political, economic and growth aspects of press development.

Hence our contention that the press in the 'Pakistan' areas in the pre-Pakistan period can be studied only in the context of subcontinental, and more specifically Indo-Muslim, journalism. In any case, since Gibbon wrote his monumental *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the inward looking, ethnocentrist approach in history has been doomed for all time to come. In addition, Sprengler, Wells, Collingwood and Toynbee have launched trends in historiography and historical writings which have made the mediaeval approach altogether outmoded.

## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Malvin L. De Fleur, *Theories of Mass Communication* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966), p.xvi.
- <sup>2</sup> The term has been borrowed from Gregory Henderson, Richard Ned Lebow and John G. Steessinger (eds.), *Divided Nations in a Divided World* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1974).
- <sup>3</sup> For instance, see S.N.H. Rizvi, *A History of Pakistan* (Dacca: Rizvi Research Institute, 1958).
- <sup>4</sup> For instance, a strong plea was made by several historians for regionalizing the history of the Pakistan areas in the pre-Pakistan period at a symposium organized as part of the Pakistan Historical Society annual conference at Karachi, on 16 February 1977.
- <sup>5</sup> For instance, see Omar Amer, *A History of Press in N.W.F.P.* (Peshawar: Freelance Research Publications, 1986).
- <sup>6</sup> Abdul Salam Khurshid, *Journalism in Pakistan: First Phase 1845 to 1857* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1964). Abdus Salam Khurshid, 'Pakistan', in John A. Lent (ed.) *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1971), pp.298-306.
- <sup>7</sup> John H. Hertz, *The Government of Germany* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1972), pp. 41-55.
- <sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Craig Baxter, 'India and Pakistan', and Rounaq Jahan, 'India, Pakistan and Bangladesh', in Henderson, *et.al*, *op.cit.*, pp.267-92, 299-331.
- <sup>9</sup> Anon, 'Party Journalism in India', in *The Near East and India*, 3 September 1925, pp.280-85.
- <sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Asad Husain, 'The Future of English-Language Newspapers in India', *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol.33, No.2 (Spring 1956) p.216; *The Indian Press Yearbook, 1948* (Madras: The Indian Press Publications, 1948); *The Indian Press Yearbook: Mid-Century Issue* (Madras: The Indian Press Publications, 1951); and J. Natrajan, *History of Indian Journalism*, Part II of the Report of the [Indian] Press Commission (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1955), pp.205, 207. For a Brief survey of the Muslim press, see Abdul Majid Salik, 'Growth of Muslim Journalism', in *A History of Freedom Movement*, Vol.3, part-II (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1963), pp.445-67; S.M.A. Feroze, *Press in Pakistan* (Lahore: National Publications, rev. ed., 1957), especially pp.103-18. On the emergence of the League oriented press, see Sharif al Mujahid, 'After Decline During Ayub Era,

departments. This is another fact of our fragmented and class ridden society and for the present we cannot impact it.

With these difficulties in mind we must redouble our efforts to delineate the way where we can contribute. In Lahore there are a number of institutions teaching arts and architecture and faculty from all of them have attended Thaap meetings. We can make further efforts to invite the entire faculty to join us in our deliberation. We have had highly rewarding talks by members of the faculty and we must continue these. The Thaap conference has further given depth to the deliberations and we can count upon a yet wider circle to join us.

To set the ball rolling, the following ideas are presented for the structure of an integrated arts institution. Similar ideas could be developed for other fields such as social sciences and other sciences with an integrationist approach.

Almost all institutions in Lahore and Karachi have widened their departments of art and architecture by bringing related disciplines within the fold. The trend is clearly visible and we are all moving forward. Our discussion will further clarify the path and the overall strategy.

It is suggested that there be a faculty of arts, architecture and culture within the context of a multi-disciplinary university, which will have as many fields of arts as resources allow. This would be a growing process. All departments within the faculty will be multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, rather than linear, will lead to higher degrees. The first year (foundation year) will be common for the whole faculty in which emphasis would be on developing the ability to use the five senses (observation) with a wide reading list, i.e. to develop cognition. Also students would be required to verbalize experiences in written form for self-evaluation and self-criticism. The objective is to make students conscious of their mind, to intelligently communicate with it and thus to refine its values. It is understood that once the process is mastered it becomes a life-long ever-improving exercise. Three fields are identified and specific suggestions are made:

### **Teaching of history**

The primary purpose of study of history is to understand ourselves and our culture; where have we come from and whither are we

going? Instead of starting from prehistoric time and come to present we find it is more understandable if we start with study of our present state, its glory or predicament, and then work backwards in time and trace the historic evolution. This could apply to our person or our styles of architecture (or the absence of any coherent style), urban growth and in fact any phenomenon. Thus we can get rid of European – centric bias in scholarship and we focus on our own present and its evolution from the past. There is no limit how far in the past we can go and in the process study other cultures wherever it widens our horizons.

### **Teaching of architecture design**

Art education should be firmly dedicated to holistic thinking about its conceptual basis. The question of form, shape and design, thus architecture, must flow from the mind of the architect always addressing the issues of tradition, function, energy efficiency, climate control, structural stability and any other factor that impinges on his concepts of the solutions to the problem. The foremost point that all architects must learn is the cultural context of the society, site and space that they operate in, and that buildings are not located or built in vacuum. The question of tradition, functional appropriateness, cultural relevance, energy efficiency, comfort and climate control must be an integral part of all designs. In the teaching institution it must be the basis of all work from the initial design to the final theses. Every assignment or project in the subject of architectural design will incorporate these elements at the simple to the complex level so that these issues become an integral part of the student's (future architect) thinking.

### **Teaching of technologies**

Technologies will be taught in correlation with the complexity of the design that students are doing and not in isolation. Thus for example air conditioning/ structure/ public health will not be taught in the abstract but in direct relation to the design at hand and therefore at different levels of complexity. Fundamental information regarding material, their behavior and availability and suitability will be taught as in science-mode.

## Conclusion

During my World Bank days I annoyed a subject specialist on education by advocating a change in the methodologies that were being implemented. 'Why do you want to reinvent the wheel?' he fumed, 'We have tried and tested this in schools in US and it works. Why don't you just use the same?' My answer was that that was precisely the problem; we are trying to fit wheels invented by West on our cart forgetting that our carts are not the same. 'We are happy to learn from your wheel' I said, 'but we have to develop a design that suits our particular cart' – and that is precisely the objective of THAAP. With windows opening toward all directions, West, East, North, South, and a willingness to learn from all, we have to look at own particularities to set our house in order. We are focusing on Art and Architecture Education, as a start, for we are equipped to contribute to the cultural values in this region and our immediate audience is the teachers of the subjects. This audience will widen to include other scientific disciplines. Together, old and young, we propose to learn from each other and develop a consensus on our objectives and methods and coordinate and cooperate in the implementation so that we can refine them further. As we achieve success in one particular field the process can be expanded and extended. This would be a continuous and an unending endeavor'.

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## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformations: the World in the Time of Buddha, Socrates, Confucius and Jeremiah* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> Humans are the only specie who can consciously commit suicide, therefore they have the option to continue living consciously.
- <sup>3</sup> See Lord Macaulay's famous 'Minute on Education' approved by the Governor General in March, 1835.
- <sup>4</sup> Markus Daechsel writes in 'Deurbanizing the City: Colonial Cognition and the People of Lahore' an essay in *People on the Move*, Talbot & Thandi (eds.) (Oxford University Press, 2004), 'Even the large education sector in the city can be linked to the interests of colonization because it was primarily designed to produce the educated manpower needed for the Imperial Administration'; for today read civil service'.

- <sup>5</sup> Higher education in science and technology was denied to the natives. See Pervaiz Vandal's *The Raj, Lahore and Bhai Ram Singh*, for details.
- <sup>6</sup> Anant Sadashiv, Altekian, *Education in Ancient India* (Delhi: Isha Books, first published, 1934, reprint 2009), gives details of Vedic Period education.
- <sup>7</sup> We see this reflected in the early years of Mayo School of Arts when no time limit was prescribed for the students to leave the school.
- <sup>8</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Holy War, Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001).
- <sup>9</sup> 1099-1298 Crusades; 1208-1227 Conquest of Estonia; 1209-1229 Albigensian Crusade; 1220-1264 The Age of the Sturlungs; 1282-1302 War of the Sicilian Vespers; 1296-1357 Wars of Scottish Independence; 1337-1453 Hundred Years' War; 1419-1434 Hussite Wars; 1455-1487 Wars of the Roses; 1499 Swabian War; 1522-1559 Habsburg-Valois Wars; 1558-1583 Livonian War; 1562-1598 French Wars of Religion; 1568-1648 Eighty Years' War; 1580-1583 War of the Portuguese Succession; 1585-1604 Anglo-Spanish War; 1594-1603 Nine Years War (Ireland); 1618-1648 Thirty Years' War; 1640-1688 Portuguese Restoration War, available at: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)., continuing to the present day.
- <sup>10</sup> Sir Isaac Newton, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, was working for the Admiralty when he discovered and formulated the laws of motion and gravitation and developed the mathematics (calculus) to analyze the same. This directly contributed to better aiming devices for guns which gave the edge to British Navy and Army.
- <sup>11</sup> To give two examples among many, the style of architecture of the British House of Parliament was changed to the Gothic in deference to the wishes of the new prime minister who did not like the previous style and the President's House in Islamabad was 'modernized' by Edward Stone by removing the dome at the suggestion of the new Chairman CDA who did not quite like the 'Islamic' version as propounded by the previous chairman.
- <sup>12</sup> Denis Dutton, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure and Human Evolution* (Bloomsbury Press, 2009).



# **Re-Constructing Pakistan Press History: Some Methodological Requisites**

*Sharif al Mujahid*

## **Abstract**

The present paper seeks to discuss in some detail the methodological problems posed in attempting to unread the historical antecedents of the Pakistan press. Pakistan being a 'divided nation', do we go in for a regional or a total-context approach. That is, do we begin with the 1840s when the first newspapers in the territories that became Pakistan in 1947 were launched or with the 1780 when the first newspapers in the subcontinent came to be founded? This question has a bearing beyond mere press history – for instance, on the writing of history itself in Pakistan. The author opts in for the latter approach, and cites precedents from the literature and gives reasons, buttressed by ground realities of the period encompassed, for his choice. The factors in the continuity of specific traditions and ideological orientation to argue why and how the Pakistan press owes its origins and early development to the Indian Muslim (or Muslim League oriented) press in the 1940s, and how even the press development prior to 1947 in the 'Pakistan' areas can be understood only in the total context of subcontinental history. The author seeks to clinch the argument by a reference to the impact of East Pakistani developments on Pakistan's political and press history during the united Pakistan (1947-1971) period, and even after. Since the rise of Gibbon, Toynbee, Spengler, Wells and Collingwood, the regional and the inward-looking ethnocentric approach in history has been doomed for all time to come, the author concludes.

A definitive study of the Pakistan press is still awaited. Such a study, if and when it is attempted, would have to be made on several dimensions. Briefly stated, it would have to treat the beginning, development, trends and characteristics of the Pakistan press in terms of the historical, political, socio-cultural and economic variables impinging upon them. Whereas the traditional approach has been to emphasize the historical and political dimensions, the trends since the middle 1960s has been towards a sociological approach. Yet, as Melvin de Fleur points out, the study

of the press in terms of societal variables comes after not before, the delineation of the historical development.<sup>1</sup> This paper seeks to discuss the problem of delineating that development.

Pakistan being a 'divided-nation',<sup>2</sup> having been separated from the Indian mainland in 1947, the unravelling of the historical antecedents of the Pakistan press presents certain methodological problems. The basic question is: how far do we go in both time and space in quest of the historical roots of the Pakistan press? Do we begin with the middle 1840s when the first newspapers in the territories that became Pakistan in 1947 were launched? Or, do we begin with the 1780s when the first newspapers made their debut in the subcontinent? These twin questions are important since they involve much more than mere dates. The former course would mean treating the press in the 'Pakistan' areas as a distinct entity on its own even when it was very much an integral part of a political, economic and administrative unit, readily susceptible to multifarious variable, and influences impinging upon it while the latter would call for studying it in the total context – that is, a larger perspective and as an integral part of sub-continental journalism – for the period prior to 1947.

Two major problems instrumentalize the raising of this question. First, its significance encompasses much beyond press history; it has as well important bearing on the writing of history as such. Till 1971, some historians advocated a narrow 'geographical' framework encompassing only the then Pakistan areas for the pre-1947 period.<sup>3</sup> Some others today even advocate a further narrow framework: confining it to the present, post-1971 Pakistan areas.<sup>4</sup>

Second, some press historians have flaunted a regional approach. This approach may be valid while doing a press history of a comparatively isolated region like the NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa),<sup>5</sup> which, though a constituent part of a larger administrative unit at one time or another, has yet remained intact region-wise in the modern period; but not in the case of a region like Punjab (Pakistan) which underwent bisection in 1947. The same principle applies to Pakistan itself.

In his major work, *Tarikh-i-Sahafat Hind-o-Pakistan* (rev. edn., 1989), and several articles, Abdus Salam Khurshid, the most notable Pakistani press historian, has adopted the larger, sub-

continental approach; but when he comes to attempting a history of the Pakistan press,<sup>6</sup> he goes in for a regional approach. He includes only those newspapers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, published in the areas that upon partition became Pakistan, while scrupulously he ignoring Muslim papers published elsewhere in the subcontinent. Equally important, ignores the emergence of a distinct Muslim press in the 1940s. And this narrow geographical framework is obviously inappropriate and that on several counts.

First, for some ninety years till 1947 the entire subcontinent was one unit – held together not only geographically politically, administratively, but also buttressed irrevocably by its unified systems of judiciary, education, press, economy and communication networks. Moreover, for varying periods during the ninety years of British imperial rule in India (1858-1947), four of the five provinces of united Pakistan – viz., East Pakistan, Sind, Punjab, and NWFP – had formed integral parts of larger provincial or administrative units like those of Bengal and Bombay presidencies and Delhi and the Punjab. Punjab and the NWFP were set up as separate provincial units in 1901; Sind was detached from Bombay Presidency and set up as a separate province in 1936; and the Bengal and Punjab were bifurcated in 1947, to create Punjab (Pakistan) and East Bengal/East Pakistan, the residue going to India. Hence, even within a geographical framework, the press in the 'Pakistan' areas in the pre-1947 period could not be treated on a discrete plane. Rather, it had to be studied as an integral part of the press in the erstwhile administrative units, and, moreover, in the overall context of subcontinental journalism.

Interestingly, the literature lends support for this approach. In his study of The Government of Germany (1972), John H. Hertz traces the evolution of the German political heritage briefly from the time of the Holy Roman Empire and in some detail from the days of the German Empire (1871 f.),<sup>7</sup> although neither the Holy Roman Empire nor the German Empire (1871-1918), nor even Germany between the two world wars (1918-39), was conterminous with the West German boundaries in the 1970s. The overriding consideration for this approach was: (i) that the core German political traditions took root during these periods; and (ii) that their evolution is also marked by continuity. Hence, these

periods are included in Hertz's survey of the German political heritage to which West Germany is heir to. Likewise, the contributors to Divided Nations in a Divided World (1974)<sup>8</sup> trace the socio-cultural and politico-psychological developments in the erstwhile undivided countries to explore the roots of the 'divided nations'.

In the geographical context, the same sort of relationship had existed between the post-1947 Pakistan press and the subcontinental press as that between political traditions in West Germany and those in the German Empire, or as that between the 'divided nations' and the mother countries. Common to all the three situations is the characteristic of continuity; it is the key variable which necessitates treatment of an issue or a tradition in a total context.

Second, the growth and development of the press in India, as elsewhere, were inextricably linked up with the crystallization of political parties and political demands. Despite the emergence of the Indian National Congress as the largest and most organized political party, the parties in the subcontinent were more or less organized along communal lines. In consequence, party journalism in India also came to be organized along these lines<sup>9</sup> – chiefly, Hindu and Muslim. There was also a small Sikh press, centred in the Punjab, and the extremely influential Anglo-Indian press encompassing the entire subcontinent. (This press, which represented and promoted the imperial cause, was to shrink in size, circulation, pervasiveness and influence only towards the close of the British raj).

By the 1920s the development of the Indian press along communal lines led to the emergence of a large, well-organized and well knit Congress-oriented (but largely Hindu) 'nationalist' press, a considerably smaller, rather poorly organized but equally strident Muslim press, and a tiny but compact Sikh press. By the middle 1940s, the Muslim press, though still small in size, became well-organized, compact, coherent and influential enough to warrant notice by, even, Indian press historians.<sup>10</sup> This distinct Muslim press, known as the (Muslim) League-oriented press, would eventually become the immediate progenitor of the Pakistan press.

Thus, unless the development of party journalism along communal lines is duly recognized and unless the emergence of a distinct Muslim press encompassing the entire subcontinent is taken cognizance of, the historical antecedents of the Pakistan press cannot possibly be genuinely located and identified. A narrow 'geographical' framework would obviously preclude the inclusion of the rise of party journalism and of a distinct Muslim press within the purview of the historical evolution of the Pakistan press. Hence, for the purpose of tracing out the development of the Pakistan press on the historical dimension, the narrow 'geographical' framework is inadequate and defective, to say the least.<sup>11</sup>

Third, since the subcontinent was partitioned along communal lines, the Muslim press as a whole, no matter where some of its constituents were located geographically, becomes the progenitor of the newly emerging Pakistan press even as the post-1947 Indian press became heir to the 'nationalist' press. This viewpoint is further buttressed by two other critical factors. First, the Muslim press owed its birth and development to movements essentially Muslim in character. The rise of the Aligarh movement (1870s), the Urdu Defence Association (1900), the demand for separate electorates and the founding of the Muslim League (1906), the pan-Islamic and Khilafat movements (1910s and early 1920s), the controversy over the Nehru Report (1928), the emergence of the comprehensive All-Parties Muslim Conference (1929) and the formulation of the Fourteen Points (1929), the reorganization of the Muslim League (1937-40), and the launching of the Pakistan Movement (1940) led to the founding of a great many Muslim papers and the strengthening of existing ones.<sup>12</sup> These movements also led to the widening of the chasm between the Hindu-owned and the growing Muslim-owned segments of the Indian press, scattered throughout the subcontinent. More important, the non-'Pakistan' areas housed more numerous and more influential Muslim papers than did the 'Pakistan' areas. During the middle 1940s, when almost the entire Muslim press in the subcontinent supported the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan, all the major Muslim papers except two were housed in the non-'Pakistan' areas. Hence the legacy of the Pakistan press encompassed the entire subcontinental Muslim press, and certainly

legally  
Indian  
Muslim  
press

not the 'mixed' bag of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Anglo-Indian papers published in the territories that became Pakistan.

On the ideological plane as well, this legacy was all-India in character. Pakistan was conceived as the geographical expression of an all-pervasive, pan-Indian Muslim nationalism, which inspired the demand for a separate, sovereign Muslim state. True: this nationalism was also promoted by such crucial factors as language, culture, history, economics, and the fortuitous existence of a Muslim majority in certain well-defined areas, but its basis was essentially a common civilizational legacy, animated by a religious sentiment. Between El-Hamza<sup>13</sup> and Durrani<sup>14</sup> the propagandists respectively of the territorial and the ideological base of the Pakistan demand,<sup>15</sup> Jinnah and the Muslim consensus went in for the latter. For instance, Jinnah rejected Gandhi's offer to hold 'regional referendums in the Pakistani areas to ascertain the wishes of all the people', and asserted that 'we claim the right of self-determination as a nation and not as a territorial unit', saying that 'it would be the self-determination of the Mussalmans and that they alone are entitled to exercise that right'.<sup>16</sup> Hence the Muslim press in the subcontinent, which espoused the cause of Muslim nationalism, must need be treated as an integral unit on the larger canvas of subcontinental journalism.

Fourth press development cannot possibly be divorced from the medium in which the newspapers are published. In the subcontinent, the three more important languages in which the newspapers were published were English, Urdu and Bengali. Papers in these languages were first published outside the territories of united Pakistan (1947-71). After the 1857 rebellion which caused a serious setback to Urdu journalism in northern India, it found a new home in the Punjab where it was promoted and patronised by the Hindus and Sikhs as well; the largest circulated Hindu and Sikh papers (e.g., *Milap* and *Ajit* respectively) were published in Urdu. Punjab apart, throughout north-western India ('West Pakistan'), the press was chiefly in the Urdu medium. Hence, even in respect of the medium dimension, the press in the 'Pakistan' areas ought to be studied in the context of the Urdu press development in the rest of the subcontinent.

Fifth, some of the more important Hindu and Sikh papers from the 'Pakistan' areas such as *The Tribune*, *Pratap*, *Milap* and

Indian  
press and  
Muslim Press,  
respectively  
migrated.

## Re-Constructing Pakistan Press History: Some Methodological Requisites

Ajit shifted themselves to (what is now) India upon partition, while some Muslim papers (e.g., *Dawn*, *Jang*, *Anjam*, *Morning News*, and *Assam Herald*) migrated to Pakistan. This two-way migration of papers points further to the existence of an 'Indian' (i.e., nationalist)-oriented and a 'Pakistan'-oriented press in the subcontinent. Their intellectual and spiritual links were with the two ideologies which, though represented by post-1947 India and Pakistan, transcended their geographical boundaries in the pre-partition era.

Integral to, but more important than, this physical shift was the socio-cultural, political and economic milieu in which the 'nationalist' and the Muslim press developed. They had, of course, shared some basic problems, traditions, and influences with each other and with the Anglo-Indian press, but the milieu in which they had developed was different. This difference in their respective historical development is critical for at least two important reasons: (i) it had perhaps the greatest impact during the formative phase of (post-1947) Indian and Pakistan journalism; and (ii) it also accounts partly for the way they have developed since 1947. (The other sources of their divergence in their respective development may be traced to their differentiation on the indices of modernization in the Lerner model.)

An extraterritorial approach is neither novel nor new: it has precedents, at least, in the cultural field. The North Americans trace back their cultural heritage to the West European civilization, the West European nations to Greece and Rome, the Pakistanis to the medieval Islamic (or Perso-Arab) civilization in the Middle East, and the India, among others, to Moenjo Daro and Harappa, Gandhara and Taxila, which are now located in Pakistan. The press, being a socio-cultural institution, must need, therefore, be studied, besides the geographical matrix, in the socio-cultural context as well.

To what incongruities an approach based purely on the present or the pre-Bangladesh geographical dimensions of the country may lead can be seen in Khurshid's account. In his discussion of pre-1947 journalism he includes non-Muslim papers like *Koh-i-Noor* (Lahore), *The Lahore Chronicle*, *The Tribune* (Lahore) and *Sind Observer* (Karachi) while excluding significant Muslim papers like *Comrade* (Calcutta/Delhi, 1911-14), *Al-Hilal*

(Calcutta, 1912-14), *Al Balagh* (Calcutta), *Musalman* (Calcutta), *Hamdam* (Lucknow, 1912-47), *Asr-i-Jadid* (Calcutta, 1919-48), *Star of India* (Calcutta, 1942-48), *Dawn* (Delhi, 1941-48), *Manshoor* (Delhi, 1937-47), and *Jang* (Delhi, 1941-47). It is true that the former set of (non-Muslim) papers did have an impact on the growth and development, tone and tenor of their Muslim contemporaries; it is also conceded that a history of the Muslim press or a delineation of the Muslim papers at the time cannot be chronicled in the total context without a reference to their non-Muslim contemporaries, and their impact on them (Khurshid's account, being descriptive rather than analytical, fails to bring out the interaction between the Muslim and non-Muslim papers, and their impact on one another.) What, however, is inexplicable is the exclusion of the second set of (Muslim) papers – that is, the Muslim contemporaries in the non-'Pakistan' areas – which were organically related to the Muslim papers in the 'Pakistan' areas. For one thing, the Muslim papers in the non-'Pakistan' areas had influenced the Pakistani papers the most; for another, some of them, having migrated to Pakistan, had also joined with the newly launched ones like *The Pakistan Times* (f. 1947) and *Naw-i-Waqt* (f. 1940) to become the nucleus of the newly emerging Pakistan press in the nation's early years. And because of this exclusion, the linkage between Khurshid's account of the historical development of the Muslim press in the 'Pakistan' areas in the pre-partition period and that of its development in the post-partition era is rather incidental and tenuous.

There are also precedents for such an approach in the literature. Bleyer<sup>18</sup> begins his history of the American journalism, not with the appearance of the first newspaper in colonial America but with the appearance of the 'corantos,' or primitive newspapers, in early seventeenth century. Following him and others, Emery and Smith trace 'the heritage of the American press' to the earliest publications in England and in western Europe.<sup>19</sup> They also devote an entire chapter to delineating the development of the press in these areas during the seventeenth century. This they do because, as they put it,

- (i) the colonial newspaper was so closely patterned after the British product that to understand the function of the press at



that time, it is necessary to explain a little about the English influence;<sup>20</sup>

- (ii) the concept of a free press [which] was eventually to prevail in the United States was first developed in England, and thus the American debt to English press traditions is incalculable.<sup>21</sup>

In a like vein, it may be argued that (i) the Pakistan-oriented newspapers in the 'Pakistan' areas during the pre-1947 period were organically related to other Pakistan-oriented or Muslim papers in the non-'Pakistan' areas; and that (ii) their more specific traditions represented an indivisible whole and, hence, the debt of the Pakistan press to Muslim press traditions is incalculable.

*Linkage with the past*  
The point that needs be stressed here is the critical problem of linkage with our past. Can we afford to delink ourselves to our total heritage in the subcontinent in the pre-partition era? Could we reconstruct or even regionalize the history of the 'New Pakistan' territories without reference to our heritage, both in the medieval and modern periods? Professor A. H. Dani thinks otherwise:

The story of its [Pakistan] past is inextricably linked up with the cross-current of history that underlay the events in South Asia. Even for the Muslims who built up a mighty empire in this part of the world, their main centre of activity was Delhi and Agra. This great mediaeval epoch cannot be separated from the heritage of Pakistan.<sup>22</sup>

Professor K. K. Aziz also comes to the same conclusion: At first sight many aspects of our history may appear too remote to be relevant to us today. But is that true? Most people would agree with the statement that the history of Pakistan begins with the advent of the Muslims in India.<sup>23</sup>

With both these authorities, the overriding consideration seems to be that each historical event has a perspective, and it can and must be analyzed and interpreted in the context of that perspective alone.

Now, if the mediaeval epoch is not so remote, how much more true is that of the modern period? By the same token, can the history of the regions constituting either united Pakistan (1947-71) or post-Bangladesh 'new Pakistan' be separated from that of the

rest of the subcontinent? The Mujahidin movement (1818-63), the 1857 rebellion, the Aligarh, Khilafat and the Pakistan movements were largely of an all-India character. Although in course of time they affected the Pakistan regions as much as they did the rest of subcontinent, their origins, for the most part, lay outside the 'new Pakistan' territories.<sup>24</sup> So was the location of papers that sustained them and contributed significantly to their success.<sup>25</sup> To be more specific, can we talk, for instance, of Justice Shah Din and the Muslim efforts in the educational field in the Punjab without a reference to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the Aligarh school, and the Mohammedan Educational Conference? By the same token, can we talk of Hasan Effendi and the Muslim efforts at educating Muslim Sind without reference to Sayyid Ameer Ali and the Calcutta-based Central National Mohammadan Association? Even the demand for the separation of Sind and for the extension of constitutional reforms to the NWFP and Balochistan were first voiced outside these regions; they were also later put forward for acceptance at the All-Parties National Convention (1928) and the Round Table Conference (1930-32) in the name of Muslim India. At another level, several writers have opined that without Aligarh, there would have been no Pakistan.<sup>26</sup> Nor would have the Muslim League won the general elections of 1945-46 but for the energetic efforts of, among others, the Aligarh students.<sup>27</sup>

The Muslim press in the 'Pakistan' regions in the pre-Pakistan period was likewise affected the most by the movements outside the region, and the tone and tenor set by them. For instance, out of the three most outstanding Muslim journalists whose tradition we often invoke – viz., Maulana Muhammad Ali, Abul Kalam Azad and Zafar Ali Khan – the first two did not belong to the 'Pakistan' regions, and the third one started his career outside the region. That is why most writers trace the historical development of the Pakistani press to the Muslim press in India.<sup>28</sup> Hence our contention that the history of the Pakistani press can be understood only in the total context of wider history.

The problem raised in this paper has relevance even for the post-partition period in view of the construction of the 'new Pakistan' boundaries to those of erstwhile West Pakistan. Briefly stated, the point at issue is this: would we or would we not include the East Pakistan-based press in an account of the historical

Can East-Pakistan be separated from the history, just had been the case with India?

## Re-Constructing Pakistan Press History: Some Methodological Requisites

development of the Pakistani press during the united Pakistan period – i.e., from 1947 to 1971? Can we afford, for instance, to ignore the influence of the political developments in East Pakistan or of East Pakistan-based political parties on the political development in West Pakistan during this period? By the same token, can we study the press in West Pakistan during the period but in the wider context of press development in both East and West Pakistan.

Actually, not to speak of the eastern press, even the natural resources and products of the East, its political temper and even the handy audience, however limited, it provided, had an impact on press development in the West. For instance, take the Dacca High Court's judgment in *The Dacca Times* case in August 1963, which upheld the right of a paper to create public opinion by healthy and even forceful criticism of the government.<sup>29</sup> Was the impact of this ruling confined to East Pakistan alone? Or could a West Pakistan paper invoke it to exercise greater freedom in its comments or defend its conduct in case of prosecution?

At another level, the newsprint shortage in the post-Bangladesh period, due to the non-availability of the Khulna (East Pakistan) newsprint, the main source of supply since 1960, had adversely affected press development in 'new Pakistan', both economically and politically. Economically, this non-availability had languished the western papers, slicing their size by about fifty per cent, and increased their production costs. Politically, it had made them dependent upon government for newsprint allocation, providing yet another lever for the governmental control of the press. This shows how even a product could have far reaching consequences on the political, economic and growth aspects of press development.

Hence our contention that the press in the 'Pakistan' areas in the pre-Pakistan period can be studied only in the context of subcontinental, and more specifically Indo-Muslim, journalism. In any case, since Gibbon wrote his monumental *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the inward looking, ethnocentrist approach in history has been doomed for all time to come. In addition, Sprengler, Wells, Collingwood and Toynbee have launched trends in historiography and historical writings which have made the mediaeval approach altogether outmoded.

Outmoded approach to history

## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Malvin L. De Fleur, *Theories of Mass Communication* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966), p.xvi.
- <sup>2</sup> The term has been borrowed from Gregory Henderson, Richard Ned Lebow and John G. Steessinger (eds.), *Divided Nations in a Divided World* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1974).
- <sup>3</sup> For instance, see S.N.H. Rizvi, *A History of Pakistan* (Dacca: Rizvi Research Institute, 1958).
- <sup>4</sup> For instance, a strong plea was made by several historians for regionalizing the history of the Pakistan areas in the pre-Pakistan period at a symposium organized as part of the Pakistan Historical Society annual conference at Karachi, on 16 February 1977.
- <sup>5</sup> For instance, see Omar Amer, *A History of Press in N.W.F.P.* (Peshawar: Freelance Research Publications, 1986).
- <sup>6</sup> Abdul Salam Khurshid, *Journalism in Pakistan: First Phase 1845 to 1857* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1964). Abdus Salam Khurshid, 'Pakistan', in John A. Lent (ed.) *The Asian Newspapers' Reluctant Revolution* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1971), pp.298-306.
- <sup>7</sup> John H. Hertz, *The Government of Germany* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1972), pp. 41-55.
- <sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Craig Baxter, 'India and Pakistan', and Rounaq Jahan, 'India, Pakistan and Bangladesh', in Henderson, *et.al*, *op.cit.*, pp.267-92, 299-331.
- <sup>9</sup> Anon, 'Party Journalism in India', in *The Near East and India*, 3 September 1925, pp.280-85.
- <sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Asad Husain, 'The Future of English-Language Newspapers in India', *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol.33, No.2 (Spring 1956) p.216; *The Indian Press Yearbook*, 1948 (Madras: The Indian Press Publications, 1948); *The Indian Press Yearbook: Mid-Century Issue* (Madras: The Indian Press Publications, 1951); and J. Natrajan, *History of Indian Journalism*, Part II of the Report of the [Indian] Press Commission (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1955), pp.205, 207. For a Brief survey of the Muslim press, see Abdul Majid Salik, 'Growth of Muslim Journalism', in A History of Freedom Movement, Vol.3, part-II (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1963), pp.445-67; S.M.A. Feroze, *Press in Pakistan* (Lahore: National Publications, rev. ed., 1957), especially pp.103-18. On the emergence of the League oriented press, see Sharif al Mujahid, 'After Decline During Ayub Era,

- 12 Pakistan Press Thrives, Improves', *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol.48, No.3 (Autumn 1971), pp.526-27; also Sharif al Mujahid, 'Pakistan' in John A. Lent (ed.), *Newspapers in Asia: Contemporary Trends and Problems* (London: Heinemann Asia, 1982), pp.480-85 and 'The English Press in Pakistan', *Pakistan Quarterly* (Karachi), VI.2, pp.38-43.
- 11 This explains Khurshid's failure to take note of the emergence of a distinct Muslim press in the subcontinent in the 1940; see note to above.
- 12 See Salik, pp.245-67; and Feroze, especially pp.108-18.
- 13 El Hamza, *Pakistan: A Nation* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1941).
- 14 F.K. Khan Durrani, *The Meaning of Pakistan* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1944).  
IM P Durrani was the most prominent Muslim writer to lift the argument for Pakistan from a territorial base to an ideological plane. He was also perhaps the only Muslim writer to intellectualize the Muslim problem. Besides, to quote his most prominent critic, he had argued 'in a systematic manner how the two nations theory had taken shape' Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1946), p.24.
- 15 For a summing up of their main arguments, see Sharif al Mujahid, 'Muslim Writings on Pakistan, 1940-47: A Survey of Tendencies', in Ahmad Hasan Dani (ed.), *Historical Writings on Pakistan: Methodology and Interpretation* (Islamabad: University of Islamabad Press, 1974), pp.193-95.
- 16 *Jinnah-Gandhi Talks* (Delhi: Central Office, All India Muslim League, 1944), pp. 30-1 (italics for emphasis).
- 17 See Daniel Lerner, *Passing of the Traditional Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958).
- 18 Willard G. Bleyer, *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927).
- 19 See, Edwin Emery and Henry Ladd Smith, *The Press and America* (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1954), Ch.I.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p.3.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p.25.
- 22 Dani, 'Introduction'.
- 23 K.K. Aziz, *Some Problems of Research in Modern History* (Rawalpindi: The Pakistan Council, n.d., but 1966). p.1. Interestingly, several historians – e.g., Qureshi, Ambedkar, Wallbank, Hardy, Panikkar, Aziz Ahmad, and Malik – have described Pakistan as being somehow in the womb of history which implies that the emergence of Pakistan cannot be understood but in the context of Indo-Muslim history. Although not subscribing to the 'womb' theory, Mujahid also feels that Pakistan's emergence cannot be explained but in the contextual

background of Indo-Muslim history. See I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962); B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker, 1945); T. Walter Wallbank, *A Short History of India and Pakistan* (New York: New American Library, 1963); P. Hardy, 'Islam in Medieval India' in William Theodore de Barry, *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958); K.M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1947); Aziz Ahmad, *Studied in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Karachi: OUP, 1970); and Sharif al Mujahid, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studied in Interpretation* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1981), ch.VIII.

<sup>24</sup> The demand for Sind's separation from Bombay was first made at the Aligarh session of the All-India Muslim League in December 1925. The resolution was moved by Maulvi Rafiuddin Ahmad of Poona and seconded by Khawaja Gul Mohammad of Ferozpur. *Resolutions of the All-India Muslim League, 1924-1936* (Delhi: AIML, n.d.), p.24 (resolution no. XIII). For details about the support the demand garnered in subsequent years, see S. Razi Wasti, 'Role of the Punjabi Leaders During Sind's Struggle for Separation from the Bombay Presidency', *The Journal of History and Political Science* (Lahore), Vol.II, No.1, 1974-75, pp.1-14.

<sup>25</sup> For *Dawn* (Delhi)'s role in the Pakistan movement for instance, see Sharif al Mujahid, 'Dawn of a new era', *Dawn* (Karachi), Quaid-i-Azam Day Supplement, 25 December 2011, p.II.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, see *The Memoirs of Aga Khan* (London: Cassel and Company Ltd., 1954), p. 36. Sachin Sen, *Birth of Pakistan* (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers Ltd., 1955), p.ix, approvingly quotes Lord Birdwood: '...one could argue a case to show that had there been no Aligarh University, there might never have been a Pakistan'.

<sup>27</sup> For their contribution, see Syed Azhar Ali, 'All India Muslim Students' Federation 1937-1947', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Karachi, 1990, ch. VII; Mukhtar Zaman, *Students' Role in the Pakistan Movement* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1979), Ch.V; Z.H. Zaidi (ed.), *Jinnah Papers*, vol.XII, *The Verdict for Pakistan* (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam Papers Wing, 2005); and G. Allana, 'Prefer Defeat to Dishonesty', in Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam as seen by his Contemporaries* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1966), p.120.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, see S.M.A. Feroze, *op.cit.*

<sup>29</sup> *The Dacca Times*, 9 August 1963; see also *Dawn* (Karachi), 8 August 1963, pp.1:5-6, 9:2.

# India through Indological Prisms: Filling-in Some Voids

*Harbans Mukhia*

## Abstract

The study of Indian history in general and the medium of Indology in particular give us an entry into a very limited, elite version of Indian society and Brahmanical culture, primarily accessible through Sanskrit, though other Indian languages were gradually added on. Both admiration as well as denunciation of it was predicated upon its difference from Europe. The rapidly evolving perspectives of history writing in India as elsewhere in the world over the past few decades encompass much wider swathes of society; consequently, the memories of the past in these segments also become objects of historical study. The methods of recovering these memories go beyond texts and archaeology; fieldwork is becoming an important in-put.

*dynamic west vs static east / orient*

The whole of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth was marked by two contrasting images, both created in Europe: that of the dynamic west, energized by science and reason and that of the static orient, possessed of culture and spirituality but devoid of rationality as Europe understood it.

*criticism*

As post-Enlightenment Europe posited its search for the rational in opposition to what it conceived of as 'the dark ages' in the preceding era when superstition – its favoured term for religion and religiosity in any form – reigned, it inaugurated a longue durée transmutation of human history. The assumption of the superiority of its rationality to what had preceded it and the assumption of its ultimate universal triumph was powerfully reinforced by the rise and dominance of positivism in the west (and by extension in the rest of the world) over the nineteenth century and nearly two thirds of the twentieth. Positivism derived its legitimacy from science, which was premised on a dichotomy between an objective reality and the subjective perception of it. The objective reality was given; it could at best be apprehended through incremental knowledge and utilized for convenience, but was immune from human intervention and was immutable. As



science, in opposition to intuitive religion, its validity was subject to demonstrable verification or falsification and its objectivity was universal. These characteristics would ensure its ultimate, universal triumph over all pre-rational, pre-scientific forms of knowledge. The rise of modern science, technology, industry, capitalism and individualism are parts of this ensemble which is predicated upon the notion of universal validity and irreversible universal triumph.<sup>1)</sup>

It was against this backdrop of the pervasive dominance of positivism, on the foregrounding of 'science' and 'rationality' in its universal triumphal march that the notion of the oriental Other was born as its alter ego; Indology was the way to understanding this Other. It was a scientific endeavour to understand what was construed as unscientific. The Other could be charming to some or repulsive to others, but there was no getting away from the sharp demarcating lines between them, with no shared spaces. Throughout the nineteenth century, most influential thinkers in Europe, including giants like Hegel and Marx – engaged in tracing the trajectories of Europe's 'progress' and its driving force – insisted that India had 'no history', i.e., no 'real' (i.e., economic, technological or social) change through its several thousand years of antiquity. Even the mode of people's dress had not changed, concluded Montesquieu. Stasis as the high water mark of India's history stood in sharp contrast to the history of Europe, whose 'stages' of development were clearly enough discernible. Europe too had had its ups and downs, true; its medieval past comprised those 'dark ages' of regression; but ever since the Renaissance, it had never looked back. Europe, of course constituted one single entity in this analysis, even as the dynamic of 'progress' was largely located in western regions of it. Eastern Europe was treated as its fringe beneficiary, as it were, yet part of the whole.

There was another 'whole' too, much vaster in terms of reach of territory or human population and far more diverse, i.e., the Orient, which could find place only on an altogether distinct footing. Indology, as part of the study of this Orient, must employ a different set of criteria, to uncover its 'mysteries'.

We thus receive two images from the Europe of the nineteenth and good part of the twentieth century, though starting much earlier: Dynamic Europe marked by science and reason and



static India possessed of an ancient and unadulterated wisdom located in its religion and mythology – primarily Hinduism – and languages – primarily Sanskrit. This latter image too visualized Indian civilization as originating in great antiquity and virtually retaining its pristine purity down to the present. Indeed some of the major figures of scholarship in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe, such as Herder and some of his disciples firmly believed that human life itself had originated in Asia and all of human civilization in India. The creators of these two images had little in common; yet one premise comprised a running thread for all: the unchanging character of Indian history, culture and civilization, especially its non-material constituents. The notion of the material west in contrast with the spiritual east was born of these postulates developed in Europe. But the spiritual India also called for a 'scientific' study, with methods developed by positivism: painstaking collection of exact data objectively analysed in order to infer unambiguous meanings out of them. Acquiring mastery of 'scientific' knowledge of India's distinctive cultural and spiritual specificities became the object.

However, claims to the monopoly of science were not merely an intellectual quest in Europe. It also implicated an exercise of power following the Baconian enunciation of 'Knowledge is power'. Constantly engraved in it was the notion of the Other, as in Christianity; science would investigate the subject, the Other, and thereby subjugate it. It is in this quest that the concept of Indology flourished. Science claimed to get to the essence of phenomena and sought to construct an objective image of the reality. The notion that science itself comprised infirmities was a post-Einstein development. Einstein himself could never be convinced of infirmities in science. 'God', he had said, 'had played no dice with the universe'; that is, every little detail had a defined and objective place in the universe which science could unravel with certainty by capturing the essence of phenomena.

The image of the essence of India that impressed itself most powerfully on Indologists was that of Hinduism. Europe was not unfamiliar with Islam, even if its perception of Islam was marked by acute adversity going back to the Crusades. But Hindu religion, its mythology and its languages, especially Sanskrit, was what marked out its difference and therefore constituted India's essence.

Even as other religions of India, barring Islam and Sikhism, and other languages also came to draw attention of scholars and institutions, the primacy of Hinduism has remained nearly intact down the ages. In some ways, the advancement of Indology at the hands of western scholarship in western institutions of learning employing western methods of investigation liberated the study of India and allowed its growth into unexplored regions of research; on the other hand, it also got straitjacketed into the equation of 'India' with the layers of its elite culture, leaving out vast reaches and diversities of cultural patterns, quite besides the constantly evolving nature of all these cultural zones, contrary to the frozen images that both positivism and Indology had created.

Study of  
Indology  
left out  
words

constantly evolving nature of India's geographical, historical and cultural zones, leaving out vast reaches and diversities of cultural patterns, quite besides the constantly evolving nature of all these cultural zones, contrary to the frozen images that both positivism and Indology had created.

No specific  
departments  
of Indology

To begin with, with the changing power relations on a world scale, it is important to abandon the colonial baggage which had necessarily accompanied the evolution of Indology in Europe. It is interesting that even as Indian academia has accepted and adapted western modes of study of disciplines, be it in natural or social sciences and languages, Indology *per se* never found favour here. No Indian university or research institution boasts of a Dept of Indology, although Departments of History, Archaeology, Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil etc. abound, as do Departments of several other related disciplines.

Equally important, as the tight stranglehold of positivism (of which Marxism was partly an inversion and largely an extension) comes under severe strain, and the notion that a 'scientific' study of societies and cultures can yield an unambiguous meaning faces acute challenge, space has opened for the accounting of diversities and multiplicities inherent in any society and culture. It is to these diversities and multiplicities that attention must be paid. 'Essence' can no longer suffice as an analytical category. One of the major transitions in the study of societies over the past few decades has been from the deployment of binary oppositions whether of continuity vs. change or class vs.

class or empire vs. colony, etc. to one of continuums where interactions and interrelationships comprise the totality. It is against this background that the study of India, as of any other society, needs to cast a second look at itself.

An offshoot of this transition has been a move to include the medium of fieldwork, along with texts, for the study of a society; this opens the window, *inter alia*, to popular perceptions of phenomena either excluded from the texts or included derisively. As has been observed above, the reach of popular perceptions is much more extensive than that of texts and its reception in populace is much wider than that of the academia. Its premises are very different from that of the academia, as is its worldview. Indeed, it would be futile to speak of one worldview at any plane of societal perceptions; there always are diverse views. But, some differences could perhaps be marked. In popular construction of 'history', there is no sense of chronology or even of space, the two essential components of the profession of the historian. An event may happen any time in an instant or over unspecified thousands of years; usually no date is assigned to an event. Yet, it provides a perspective that is very different from the one received from the academy or from the mainstream. Let us illustrate with some examples.

We are all familiar with the figure of the young Bhagat Singh, who invited the death penalty by throwing a non-lethal bomb in the Assembly Hall during the late Colonial regime in New Delhi, in April, 1929. The same building now functions as Independent India's Parliament. A young historian of Punjab, , wished to go beyond the received image of Bhagat Singh and beyond the traditional divide between the nationalist and Marxist historiography of India's freedom struggle and engaged in some extensive fieldwork in his state, coalescing it with literary textual data. The results are fascinating. In the homes in Punjab, Bhagat Singh is seen as a bridegroom; that's his pervasive image. Gaur virtually opens his book with the endearing observation: 'The party or official or nationalist image of Bhagat Singh cannot be squared with the (so far unexplored) people's image of their martyr/hero.' Bhagat Singh, in this narrative, figures in marriage songs (*ghori*), *qissa* (popular stories told in verse form), *marhi* (funeral narratives), *boli* (folk catch-songs), *tappey* (folk-composed

Bhagat  
Singh as  
bridegroom

Bhagat Singh: an intimate member of every family.

### Challenges of History Writing in South Asia

couplets) and so forth. Immediately, Bhagat Singh is neither tied down to the bomb he had thrown, nor does he remain the distant figure who fought for India's freedom by inviting death for himself; he is an intimate member of every family, is every family's bridegroom. He becomes part of everyday and everyone's life. This image is not susceptible to a positivist search for objective truth, nor does it cohere with the 'essence' of India, derived from Sanskrit; but its 'reality' persists in the cultural ambience which envelops his memory.

Porous nature of Indian communities

Indology also seems to be dead certain about the univocal meaning of the term 'Hindu' and by implication of other religious identities, especially 'Muslim', perceived in mutually exclusive, indeed adversarial relationship. In doing so it overlooks a host of literature that underlines the porous nature of these identities.

eg. Sufism

Numerous studies of Sufi poetry and practices at Sufi dargāhs, medieval Bhaktī poetry, lives of Bhaktī saints, and the genre of poetry, the Urdu ghazal, all very evocative forms of popular culture, defy the drawing of firm boundaries around these denominations of Hindu and Muslim. But such defiance goes beyond these forms. Ramya Sreenivasan brings to us two fascinating accounts of Sultan Alauddin Khalji's conquest of the Rajput kingdom of Jalor in 1311. The 'official' history of this conquest, as that of other conquests, is simple enough: the Rajput ruler had earlier submitted to the Sultan but had prevaricated in complying with the terms. The Sultan then invaded the territory and vanquished the unreliable feudatory. The stories that Sreenivasan explores are not works of 'history', hence not quite open to 'historical' inquiry. Yet, they bring to the surface a different perspective. She explores two accounts in the regional languages of Gujarat and Rajasthan, written respectively around a century and a half and two centuries and a half after the event: the Kanhadde Prabandh and Nainsī rī Khyā. The latter modifies a number of details of the former, but both relate the historically improbable story of the Sultan's elder daughter having fallen in love with the Prince of Jalor, insisted on marrying him, even made her father agree to it, and committed sati when her 'husband' died in battle against her father.<sup>3</sup> The symbolism that inheres in the stories is important and modifies the lessons we learn from

# Towards a More Capacious and Contradictory History

Gyanendra Pandey

1. <sup>1st</sup> P statement

Paying tribute to Dr. Mubarak Ali's interventions in South Asian historiography is perhaps best done by engaging with some of the orthodoxies that have reigned in the different countries of the region, from the end of British colonial rule until today. I shall focus on India in this essay, since that is the location and academic world I know best. For the sake of convenience, I shall also frequently cite from my own attempts to grapple with established practices and patterns of interpretation among Indian historians. I need hardly say that I am far from being alone in this attempt at revisiting and 'democratizing', inherited versions of history. This is an endeavor that is shared by postcolonial critics and historians from many backgrounds – feminists, representatives of diverse lower class, lower caste and other 'minority' communities, environmentalists, and oppositional scholarship of other kinds. I count Dr Mubarak Ali as a distinguished member of this collection of concerned citizens and critical scholars, and offer this brief account of my engagement with ongoing debates in Indian history as one way of paying tribute to his own challenging of reigning orthodoxies and blind spots in the writing of history in Pakistan.

2. <sup>2nd</sup> P scholarship

3. <sup>3rd</sup> P historiography + violence

I shall divide my discussion into two sections. The first concerns the history of nationalism and communalism – both subjects of considerable controversy and debate in the history, and historiography, of the subcontinent, and issues that Dr Mubarak Ali has addressed directly or indirectly in many of his writings. The second section turns to the history of violence and the 'everyday', and questions surrounding these that have attracted the rigorous attention of historians and other social scientists only in recent years. However, these new questions and investigations clearly relate to, and build upon, the investigations and critiques mounted by an earlier generation of historians, Dr Mubarak Ali prominent among them.

### **On nations and communities**

The anti-colonial struggle in India was one of the two or three great mass movements of the first half of the twentieth century. By 1939, it was possible for Jawaharlal Nehru to claim that the frontiers of the Indian national movement lay in China on the east and Spain in the west, reflecting the international aspect of the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. By that time, too, the demand for social transformation and economic justice was a feature of the anti-colonial and nationalist struggle, the 'workers' and peasants' state' in Russia was being hailed as a beacon light, and working people all over British India were beginning to demand the rights of full citizens.

The struggle against colonialism in the subcontinent began of course in a far more scattered and tentative form. In the later nineteenth century, urban professionals and notables had formed diverse public associations that held occasional meetings and produced moderate manifestos and appeals. Even these associations had to reckon with the conditions and difficulties of arbitrary colonial rule; some spawned more radical splinters in time; and some saw their concerns overlapping with the concerns of wider sections of the population as expressed in episodic (but significant) local protests and risings. It was not until after the First World War, however, that these different streams of politics came together more fully to generate the mass struggle that is remembered as the Indian national movement.

For a long time, Indian nationalist historiography explained this transformation in terms of the thought and actions of an extraordinary leadership, unmatched in its vision and commitment. British colonialist (and neo-colonialist) historiography, in its turn, argued that this leadership itself, and consequently the Indian struggle as a whole, was a product of colonial education and reform, and more specifically (in a version that came to have considerable influence in the 1970s) that the character and power of the movement flowed from the constitutional arrangements and opportunities offered by this reforming colonial regime.

Along with other research and writings of the late 1970s and early 1980s, my first book, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, challenged the received understanding of an always already incipient popular struggle for the establishment of an

always already known, or pre-destined, Indian nation.<sup>2</sup> Several new studies attempted to unravel the layered character of Indian nationalism, and underlined the contestation between classes, communities and aspirations that went into the forging of the anti-colonial movement. We demonstrated, for example, that localized peasant protests, like much else that was passed off as 'social' or 'cultural' effervescence in the existing literature, were very much part of the contemporary political struggle and critical to the making of the broader nationalist movement. Our proposition was that the Indian national movement and its achievement was more layered than either colonialist or nationalist histories, or their latter-day versions, had allowed; that behind its achievements lay not only the initiatives and sacrifices of an enlightened leadership, but also the initiatives and struggles of masses of people in diverse economic and cultural situations with diverse claims on liberation; and that the achievement too was more incomplete, and (for many) more uncertain than had been made out.

*Naxalite*  
Conceived at a time when the Naxalite movement had raised important questions about the extent of the bourgeois democratic revolution in India and the way forward to a more just and egalitarian social arrangement, these new investigations were centrally concerned with the part that workers and peasants and other 'ordinary' people had played in the recent history of India. They raised questions about the contest over the national idea, as much as over how that idea – or those ideas – were to be realized. It attempted to underline the historicity, or historical character, of nationhood and nationalism; and stressed the importance of studying the process whereby that sense of nationhood and that feeling of nationalism came into being, as well as examining the divisions and contradictions that remained. Among these was the grave matter of communalism, which Indian nationalism, in its mature phase, considered its most important stumbling block.

Let me turn to this issue now, as I did in the research and writing that I undertook after my investigation of what had earlier been seen as the discrete realms of peasant politics and Indian nationalism. Something of the same kind might be said about 'nationalism' and 'communalism'. Communalism in the peculiar colonial usage that we adopted in South Asia referred of course to political movements and activities based on the proclaimed

common interests (economic, cultural, political) of members of a religious community, in opposition to the politics and activities of members of another religious community (or communities), and to the real or imagined threat from these. Of necessity, it referred also to the condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between people belonging to different religious denominations that commonly accompanies or follows from these politics. Yet the significance of the concept was hardly exhausted by such definitions.

Recall that, in the subcontinent, the term communalism was commonly applied in colonial times to describe the conflict between Brahmans and non-Brahmans and the emergence of a powerful non-Brahman movement in southern India. Likewise, the debate on the communal question at the Round Table Conferences of 1930-32 and the Communal Award that followed was concerned with the political weightage to be granted not only to religious minorities and the Anglo-Indians, but also to the so-called Untouchables (the Scheduled Castes and Tribes of the Government of India Act of 1935 and the Indian constitution of 1950). What was at issue in this politics of communalism was the place that would be found for diverse social-political communities in the affairs of the larger political community, itself claiming the status of nation-statehood.

In asking questions about the relationship between communalism and nationalism, I argued that what is called communalism in our part of the world gained a great deal of its force from its likeness to nationalism, that these are contradictory yet related ways of conceptualizing the political world, thinking political futures and fighting for particular political arrangements. My 1998 book, The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India, noted that 'communalism' was a category of colonialist knowledge. The irony was that anti-colonial commentators and publicists, fighting for the establishment of an Indian nation-state, did more than anyone else to propagate it.

The category of communalism appeared in colonial discourse as a means of dealing with the political needs and aspirations of the subject population, and of making sense of the new kinds of plural societies that colonial rulers encountered in the colonies. Anti-colonial nationalists, in their turn – schooled as they were in the virtues of European style nationalism and in European

broadly  
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Anglo-Indian

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histories that presented rosy accounts of the complete separation of church from state in their countries – used the category of communalism to portray a certain position in debates on the political future of these same societies. They appropriated the term and exploited it as a weapon with which to tar the politics of those who made diverse claims on behalf of different religious, ethnic or caste communities.

Some critics of that study jumped on its title and concluded that in my hands 'communalism', or 'communalisms' as some of them prefer to have it (meaning thereby distinct entities called 'Hindu communalism' and 'Muslim communalism'), were ultimately attributable to colonial discourses, 'the product of Western, colonial power-knowledge and its classificatory strategies.' The suggestion was that my interpretation somehow reduced 'real' happenings on the ground, real differences and real conflicts, to a matter of conceptualization, and made communalism – like caste in the hands of some other postcolonial scholars – into a phantom product of discourse, and above all of colonial discourse and its classificatory strategies.

The critics in question would be the last to suggest that anti-colonial nationalism was the gift of colonialism, even if the fact of colonial domination was its necessary ground. It is not clear to me why the contention that the colonialist intervention was crucial to the emergence of communalist categories, communalist organization, and the category of communalism itself, reduces communalist politics to the handiwork of colonialism. My point about communalism as a colonial mode of thought or representation is that it was the product of a colonial interpretation of history in which religious assemblages (especially 'Hindus' and 'Muslims') existed as sharply differentiated and always already constituted and antagonistic blocks, whose history consisted in periodic bouts of bloodletting.

I argued that nationalists stayed with the proposition of separatism, antagonism and violence as the constitutive elements of communalism. They attributed the growth of these elements to the machinations of the colonial power, although sometimes, in some hands, deeper and longer-lasting memories and perceptions were also seen to be at work. More to the point, the nationalists stereotyped this kind of (communalist) political tendency as a

discrete and substantive entity, which was the other of nationalism (another substance). They failed thereby to fully appreciate not only the force and the complexity, but also the tentativeness – of both.

What this view neglects too easily are the processes and articulations by which these political positions arose, the historical contexts that made them possible, and the conflicting and often ambiguous traits that characterized them and served to make them what they were. Rather than seeing communalism in this way as a thing-like creature, sharply distinguished from nationalism and other transformative struggles of the colonial period, what I had suggested was that these were contradictory yet related ways of conceptualizing the political world, thinking political futures and fighting for particular political arrangements. 'The investigation of communalism must... be part of a larger exercise,' as I wrote, 'aimed at understanding the construction of Indian society and politics in recent times'. It must take account not only of sectarian mobilization and demands made on the basis of putative differences between people adhering loosely to diverse religious denominations, but of class and caste antagonisms, colonialist and nationalist perceptions and interventions, and more

Communalism is  
larger than  
nationalism  
It must  
recognize the  
pluralist  
society not  
compromised  
of India

### The 'everyday' and the 'extraordinary'

Today, several decades after the inauguration of a serious academic debate on the question of precisely whose interests the nation served, and what kinds of history writing allowed the naturalization of the nation-state of India, and its elevation to a sacred position beyond critique, the intellectual (if not the wider political) climate appears a little different. There is greater recognition, and acceptance, of the sound historical view that nations are not given from some immemorial past, but made through struggle in a contradictory and messy present (or, at any rate, in a much more recent past and present).

Intellectual  
shift.

As scholars and academics, then, we are somewhat more sensitive to the challenges involved in negotiating the more difficult (and 'inexplicable') aspects of the making of our uncertain, still contradictory and challenging present – whether in the form of nation-states, or particular religious, linguistic, caste and other communities that claim us as belonging exclusively to them, or

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v. imp.  
violence

particular traditions and histories that are advertised and broadcast as our 'real' histories. Yet older assessments linger on, among them judgments on the nature of the historical, and the significance of violence and the everyday in the writing of 'scientific' history. An examination of these issues has a great deal to tell us about the challenges of a new history and the limits of traditional historiography.

My book, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (2001) formed a part of this fresh exploration. I attempted in that study simultaneously to portray both the enormity of Partition violence and the impossibility of describing it. As in all of my earlier work, *Remembering Partition* asked questions about the histories that are claimed as the 'real' histories of India, the construction of the 'normalized' nation, its ('mainstream') culture and politics, its collective amnesia – and how such amnesia is produced.

amnesia to violence

The renewed attention to the question of violence in history raised a new question for historians: the question of what counts as 'historical' violence – a violence that historians need to investigate – as opposed to 'inconsequential', perhaps indiscriminate and unpredictable violence that we, presumably, simply live with. A distinguished colleague and friend, the Marxist scholar, political scientist and political activist, Javeed Alam, summed up a widely held progressive position on this issue in the 1990s, in the midst of the resurgence of interest in India in the history of Partition. Intervening in the contemporary debate, he argued forcefully for the importance of *not* studying Partition violence, but focussing rather on the centrality of the state and other 'large organisations', of long-term historical processes, and of 'history' in this sense.

'Looking at Partition,' Alam noted, there is something which strikes us as a particularity. There are innumerable cases of large-scale massacres mutually indulged in by people at a moment of loss of judgement, of a sense of proportion, at a moment of

frenzy. There is no involvement of large organisations or the state as the instrument of mass killings. You can't therefore talk of these events as a general phenomena [sic] <sup>6</sup>

Detailed historical work on the event suggests different findings on the involvement of 'large organisations' <sup>7</sup> but that is not my concern at this point. Let me draw attention, instead, to the critic's notion of the 'general' and the 'particular', which is readily translated into the 'historical' and the 'unhistorical'. 'There are large historical forces behind the little events that happen,' Alam observed. 'The breach between Hindus and Muslims in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it becoming politicised, leading through a very tortuous course to Partition. I think, for example of the role of the British state and its policy of systematic divide-and-rule, of playing one community against the other...'. The 'little events' – violence and rape, mass murder and the expulsion of whole communities – were, somehow, irrelevant. They were the product of other forces and other processes, which were what required study. The 'little events' themselves were, in this view, best forgotten.

Alam distinguished three different kinds of violence. The first – unquestionably historical – are events in which a state or state-like body directly carries out genocide or massacres: as in Germany, Serbia and Russia, he tells us. India in 1984 provided a variant, when 'the state became a part of the violence against the Sikhs'. 'What remains crucial,' he stated, 'is the presence of a state which is the perpetrator [as in Nazi Germany].... It is right, even morally necessary, to institutionalise the memory of the Holocaust'.

A second brand of collective violence that requires notice is of the kind witnessed in India in 1992-93, when the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 'a very large organisation', incited mass killings over the Babri Masjid issue: 'the state wasn't there as perpetrator but it could have controlled [the violence] and it did not'. There is a third category, however, 'where people become victims of violence where at a moment of a loss of sanity they start killing each other. It is this third type of violence which we saw at Partition. This should be left behind, should be forgotten, so that people may live in peace, socially normal everyday life, politically as well as individually...'.

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As against this stance, our point was to recognize and confront the reigning demands of nationalism and of history writing, and the unity and uniformity that these insisted upon. What is striking about these statist demands is their internal inducement to violence, since something 'sacred' is protected by it. It was in this context that it becomes critical to stress the need to investigate all historical violence as a social fact.

Indeed, it is clear that the representation of many (most?) acts of violence in our history as an aberration deflects attention away from the way the construction of a 'normal' India sets different populations – the Muslims, the nationalities of the North East, and sometimes other communities – against the 'authentic' nation. In India today, as no doubt in Pakistan and Bangladesh (and the USA, and Britain and Germany, and elsewhere) there is a violence involved in the unrelenting construction of 'enemies of the nation', and the concomitant denial of equal rights or respect to the latter.

*repeated  
against  
British*

The violence is unceasing, if partly unconscious and often disguised. It may be noticed in the practice of administrative and police surveillance, in history books, in films and in the media, which reinforce widely held beliefs and attitudes that are expressed commonly in graffiti in all kinds of public places, and by people standing at railway ticket counters, or sitting in tea-stalls and in our drawing rooms. It is implicit in the insistent construction of permanent 'majorities' and 'minorities', based usually on supposedly immutable racial, religious or ethnic differences, and in the construction of particular, 'special' kinds of minority (the Jews in Europe, the Asians in East Africa, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Muslims in so much of the world today).

These are unlike other minorities because of the threat they supposedly pose to the mainstream of the 'natural' political community, or more accurately to its ruling classes. Sometimes, this sense of peril follows from the presence of particular groups in sizable numbers, which threaten the balance of a population – and hence of power. More often, and often enough to make this a very worrying pattern, it is because the 'mainstream' *imagines* the emergence of such a demographic and political challenge.<sup>8</sup>

It is my contention, then, that a routinization of violence occurs not only in the unashamed and repeated display of

spectacular and brutal acts of aggression, nor yet in the mundane, banal, everyday exercise of power over women and children, politically disadvantaged communities and the poor. It occurs also in the construction and naturalization of particular categories of thought, in history and in politics. What is it that counts as history, as historical event and historical (or legal) evidence? Whose word counts, and how much? What are the terms in which we are to understand the distribution of a population, and therefore of its political demands and needs? What do we describe as violence?

If the academic historian (and political scientist)'s injunctions regarding the state and large organizations were to be followed, the personal could never be political; and there would never be a history of 'normal' domestic violence, or, to take another example, of the abuse and discrimination suffered by 'deviant' cultures – from nomadic migrants to today's sexual minorities. This is a practice of history that we can ill afford to stay with, in the current state of our states and our nations, and the range of our social and political struggles more broadly – not only in South Asia but over much of the world.

### **A concluding thought**

Efforts to shake the complacency of disciplines, and disciplinary forms of writing, may take many forms. For historians in countries like India with a heritage of long anti-colonial, nationalist struggle – and yet, plainly, not for them alone – one way of troubling received histories has been to question the frame of national history, to think outside the box of the nation-state, and thereby outside the box of what is traditionally thought of as history. One could extend the proposition to thinking outside the box of what is thought of as 'politics', or 'violence', or 'art', and so on. The point is so obvious that I need not dwell on it here, except to say that the assertion 'this is not history', or not 'real' history, or 'merely supplementary' history – or (more polemically) 'dangerous politics' or, in yet another common reaction, 'too politically correct' – has long dogged feminist scholarship, subaltern studies, minority histories: and it shows no signs of disappearing anytime soon.

The task of confronting the common sense of nation-states, and of a simple narrative of progress through history, remains challenging and urgent. What we need to work for is the

recognition and presentation of a far more capacious and contested past than we have so far admitted into our history texts for the peoples and inhabitants of South Asia – in all their variety, indeterminacy and contradictoriness. Such a view of the past, apart from being more comprehensive and accurate, is likely also to contribute to the production of a richer, more receptive and tolerant present – and more equitable futures. In pursuing this task, I might add, we would be doing no more than following the example of courageous public intellectuals like Dr. Mubarak Ali.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> *National Herald*, Lucknow, 24 January 1939.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies, Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vols.1-3 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982-84); David Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat. Kheda District, 1917-1939* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981); Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse?* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: Class, Community and Nation in Northern India, 1920-1940* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), revised edition (London: Anthem Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), revised edition (Delhi, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 1997), pp. 44, 98, 361; also Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth Century Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.17 and *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> The quotations that follow are all taken from 'Remembering Partition', a dialogue between Javeed Alam and Suresh Sharma, *Seminar*, no.461.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Mushirul Hasan, ed., *India's Partition. Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993); Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided. Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University

Press, 1991); Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India* ( Delhi: Viking, 1998); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947, Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); Vazira Yacoobally Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), and Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, *op.cit.*

- <sup>8</sup> For one discussion of this kind of reaction, see Ruby Lal and Gyan Pandey, 'Who are We?' in their column 'North American Notes and Queries', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, Vol. XXXIX, No.19 (May 8-14, 2004).



# Rethinking Mughal India: The Challenge of a Princess's Memoir

*Ruby Lal*

Mughal historiography is still largely rooted in a tradition of writing about military and political power, in this instance, the emergence of the Mughal Empire – and its decline. British colonial rulers (and writers) were enamored with the Great Mughals, whom they saw as their immediate predecessors. Postcolonial Indian historiography has continued to be fascinated by the Mughal achievement, seeing in it evidence of India's historical greatness, autonomous development, and even secularism. For all that, mainstream Mughal historians continue to be engaged in a fairly traditional manner with the political and economic bases of Mughal power. They have had little to say about social conditions and cultural relations, not to mention questions of gender – a marked difference, one might add, from the ways in which historians and others have engaged with the history of India in colonial and postcolonial times. The task of studying gender relations at the Mughal court, and rethinking political, social and cultural milieu in light of new questions that one might ask about domestic life and familial relationships, has only recently been seriously engaged.<sup>2</sup>

gender relations in the Mughal court

How does one construct an alternative history of the Mughals, one that takes distance from the legacy of overwhelmingly political-administrative-institutional accounts, and of those social histories in which history is presented in such static terms that it gives the reader an image of royalty valid for all times and places. It has been claimed that part of the reason for not writing such alternative histories, for example, the history of the Mughal domestic world and its women (around which I build my arguments in this paper), lies in the inadequacy of available source material.<sup>3</sup> However, the term 'inadequacy' requires some unpacking. Are sources so scarce as not to provide even the possibility of raising new kinds of questions? Are there not other

attendant questions of 'inadequacy'? For example, how have the most 'important' Mughal sources become available to us? In other words, what happens to their content and context in the process of collating, editing, and translating? Surely these procedures affect the way in which a source is 'archived' (made into a 'source') and 'read'.

The following discussion that centres on the first three Mughal kings, Babur (1487-1530), Humayun (1508-1556), and Akbar (1556-1605) should show that the question of inadequacy is only part – and perhaps a small part – of the problem. Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur was a descendent of Chingiz Khan on his mother's side and Timur on his father's. He spent most of his life fighting with the princes of other Timurid territories. Most notable among these combats are Babur's long drawn out struggles with the Uzbiks, the 'genuine Chingizids' as Maria Eva Subtelny calls them, the direct descendants of Chingiz Khan through his son Juchi.<sup>5</sup> Defeated in these struggles to gain a territorial foothold, Babur was pushed to Afghanistan. He finally acquired a territorial base in Hindustan in 1526 by defeating Sultan Ibrahim Lodi of Delhi. Thus he laid the foundation of Mughal rule in India.

Humayun, son of Babur and the second Mughal *padshah* (king), encountered massive difficulties in retaining his father's conquests in India. The biggest challenge to his kingship came from Sher Khan Sur who ruled southern Bihar. After being defeated by Sher Khan in 1540 near Kanauj, Humayun became an exile in Persia and parts of Afghanistan. In 1554, however, he led his army back and fought a victorious battle and restored the Mughal monarchy. Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar, the son of Humayun, was the third Mughal ruler. The Mughal 'empire' in the strict sense of the term, with all its regalia and splendor, came into being in Akbar's time.

Let us begin with the question: what are the records that make up the accepted archive for early Mughal India? For Babur, his autobiography, the *Baburnama*,<sup>6</sup> and the *Tarikh-i Rashidi* by Muhammad Haydar Dughlat,<sup>7</sup> an account composed by his cousin in 1545-46, remain the most popular texts for scholars. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat spent most of his career in Kabul. He was in close contact with Babur during this period, and his work is valuable as it highlights the political-cultural intricacies of those

parts of Central Asia and Afghanistan that Babur was dealing with at the time.

For Humayun, the following histories have been used most extensively. The *Qanun-i Humayuni* (also called *Humayun-nama*) was composed in 1534 under Humayun's patronage by one of his officials, Khvandamir. The latter was the grandson of the famous historian Mirkhvand, the author of *Rawzat-us-Safa*. As Hidayat Hosain notes, 'even when Khwandamir was still young his renown as a student of history was acclaimed by the scholars of his day'.<sup>8</sup> The author spent time at the court of Ghazi Sultan-ibn-i Mansur-ibn-i Husiyn Bayqura, the ruler of Herat (1468-1505), and in Khurasan and Persia, before joining Babur in 1528.<sup>9</sup> Khvandamir's memoir is, as he tells us, an eyewitness's account of the rules and ordinances of Humayun's reign, accompanied by descriptions of court festivities, and of buildings erected by the *padshah* (king).<sup>10</sup> The *Tazkirat-ul-Vaqi`at* (also called the *Humayun Shahi*, and the *Tarikh-i Humayun*) was put together in 1587 by Jawhar Aftabchi, Humayun's ewer-bearer. Composed in a 'shaky and rustic' Persian, the text was subsequently revised by Ilahabad Fayzi Sarhindi.<sup>11</sup> This contemporary and rather candid account by a servant has been one of the major source books for the reconstruction of the life and times of the second Mughal, although it has not been adequately explored in some respects.<sup>12</sup>

Next in the corpus of materials is the *Tazkireh-i Humayun va Akbar* by Bayazid Bayat, which was completed in 1590-91. It is a history of the reigns of Humayun and Akbar from 1542 to 1591. The author was a native of Tabriz and later joined the army of Humayun. He was apparently suffering from paralysis when he wrote the memoir, and therefore dictated it to a scribe.<sup>13</sup> These two later biographies owe their origins to the time when materials were being collected for an official history during Akbar's reign. It was in this same context that Gulbadan Banu Begum, the aunt of the emperor, wrote her account – the *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah* – about which I shall say more in the next section.

The first official history of the Mughal court was commissioned by Akbar. The *Akbarnama* (completed in 1596),<sup>14</sup> a history of Akbar's life and times, and its official and equally voluminous appendix, the *A`in-i Akbari*<sup>15</sup> (an administrative and statistical report on Akbar's government in all its branches),

written by a close friend and minister of the emperor, Abu'l Fazl Allami, have remained the most important sources for all histories of his reign. Apart from the imperial history, 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni's three-volume *Muntakhab-ut-Tavarikh* has also been very important.<sup>16</sup> Badauni, a severe critic of Akbar's policies, wrote his history in secrecy. The text was hidden, and subsequently copied and circulated after the death of Akbar. Historians have found this chronicle as a useful counter to the panegyric account of the court chronicler, Abu'l Fazl; using it either to cross-check Abu'l Fazl's 'facts' or to get a 'fuller picture' of the political and religious issues of the time. In the same vein of getting a rather more 'objective' picture, students of Akbar's reign have found a neutral middle ground in the cautious, even-handed manner of description of the *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, written by another member of Akbar's court, Nizam al-Din Ahmad.<sup>17</sup>

One illustration of the pivotal position ascribed to these sources may be found in Harbans Mukhia's well-known study entitled *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar*.<sup>18</sup> The arrangement of the book is telling. In the three central chapters of the book, the author discusses the three 'major' historians of Akbar's empire: the court-chronicler Abu'l Fazl, the critic 'Abd-ul-Qadir Badauni, and Nizam al-Din Ahmad, the moderator, as it were. Mukhia's aim, in his own words, was to write about the 'basic form; contents; attitudes towards the sources of information; treatment of history and historical causation; [and] style' of these chroniclers.<sup>19</sup> His penultimate chapter is entitled 'Some Minor Historical Works Written During Akbar's Reign'.<sup>20</sup> Here Mukhia selects for discussion the *Tazkirat-ul-Vaqi'at* by Jawhar, Humayun's ewer-bearer, the *Tazkireh-i Humayun va Akbar* by Bayazid Bayat, and the *Tuhfa-i Akbar Shahi* by 'Abbas Sarwani. While reading this chapter, I expected to find Gulbadan's text among the 'minor historical works'. Instead, all we have is a footnote in which the author says, 'I have not included a study of the *Humayun Nama* of Gulbadan Begam in this chapter though it falls in the same class of works as the three mentioned above. The reason is that I feel I have practically nothing to add to what its translator, Mrs. Beveridge, has said in her introduction to the translation'.<sup>21</sup>

Mukhia, in fact, adds little to our knowledge of the meaning and significance of the minor texts he discusses. It is

striking that he does not find even a tiny space for the Begum's memoir. The fact that the author provides no more than a single footnote, and his comment that he has nothing to add to what the translator of the text said in 1902, invites some reflection. Two suggestions might be made in connection with Mukhia's silence on this question. His reasons for not including the Begum's memoir in his monograph may stem from the fact that the author himself distinguishes between major (political-administrative, and emperor-centered) and minor (of royal women, servants, and so forth) sources, privileging the 'hard politics' of the former against the 'soft society' of the latter, thus neglecting to see the power-relations that go into the making of such categories. The presumption of the supposedly central character of some sources, as opposed to the peripheral (or minor) status of others, derives in this case, from a belief that despite limitations, certain texts like the *Akbarnama*, for instance, are authentic because they were based upon 'official documents as well as memoirs of persons involved in, or witness to, the events'.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, Mukhia is likely aware of the challenges posed by feminist perspectives and questions in history writing, and does not know what to do with this unusual memoir – or those challenges. Therefore in his writing, the Begum's text becomes even more peripheral than the other so-called minor historical works. In any case, all this amounts to a refusal to take on the task of looking anew at sources, and to acknowledge major developments that had occurred in history writing even before his book came out in 1976.

What has marked Mughal historiography for a long time now is that a canonical position has been ascribed to particular sources. The scholars' choice of certain sources as basic and central has, of course, in turn, colored their own history writing. Relying heavily on texts like the *Akbarnama*, historians have often uncritically reproduced the primary sources themselves, and therefore duplicated one or another chronicler's assessments of the empire, imperial relations and other related matters. In this way many of our modern histories have turned out to be not very different from the primary text (or texts) through which they are constructed.

Thus a particular focus in Mughal historiography has privileged certain kinds of sources; and the substantial nature of those privileged sources has, in turn, tended to perpetuate only certain kinds of histories. The interest in agrarian-administrative-institutional histories has made chronicles like the *Akbarnama* and the *A'in-i Akbari* appear essential to any undertaking in Mughal history. However, as may already be evident, there are numerous other accounts and descriptions available for a reconstruction of other histories of Mughal times.

One has to ask why it is that the *Akbarnama* and the *A'in-i Akbari* immediately capture the historian's attention when we turn to a reconstruction of the history of Akbar? Why is it that the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyan*,<sup>23</sup> *Takmila-i Akbarnama*,<sup>24</sup> *Zubdat-ut-Tavarikh*,<sup>25</sup> or *Haft Iqlim*,<sup>26</sup> for instance, do not figure in our minds in the same way? Part of the answer surely is that the *Akbarnama* and the *A'in-i Akbari* have been singled out – because of their historical 'accuracy' and 'objectivity', but perhaps most of all because they are the official sources that deal most directly with political-administrative matters.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, other chronicles do not stand on their own in the same way; they simply become adjuncts to these authoritative documents. Several of the other texts mentioned above are well-known but little used. There is no doubt that many different dimensions of Mughal history could be more fully explored through an examination of a wider range of known, but neglected sources.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, there are other kinds of sources, apart from the 'minor' texts mentioned above, that would repay closer examination. Among these is the great fund of Mughal miniature paintings, as well as Mughal buildings and architectural sites that survive in large numbers. These too are not hidden or unrecognized. Akbar and his successors had the existing royal biographies, and other important volumes of histories and legends, illustrated – so that miniature paintings form a striking and important part of many of the historians' most prized sources, including the *Baburnama* and the *Akbarnama*. However, these other sources – visual materials, the anecdotal and poetic accounts of women and servants and so on – have been rendered peripheral by existing historiography, either because it treats them as belonging to a separate, specialized discipline (such as art history), or because they are thought to

address trivial matters. Let us consider only one of these, Gulbadan Banu Begum's *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah*,<sup>29</sup> and what it tells us about the lively and changing domestic lives of the early Mughals, as they battled, struggled, dreamed of progeny and empire, and survived to live another day.

### **The challenge of a princess' memoir**

Gulbadan Banu Begum was the daughter of Babur, sister of Humayun, and aunt of Akbar. She was born in 1523 in Kabul, and traveled to Hindustan (to Agra) at the age of six-and-a-half (1529), after Babur had made some substantial conquests in that region. Her mother was Dildar Begum, but Maham Begum, 'the wife of Babur's affection', adopted her.<sup>30</sup> As her memoir reveals, Gulbadan witnessed the early turmoil of Babur and Humayun's ruler(ship): she was one of the women who moved with the Mughal household time and again, participated in the births, festivities, and joined in the mourning of deaths and other losses to the family.

She was married to her second cousin Khizr Khvajeh Khan, a Chaghatai Mughal, but no details of her marriage are found in her text. She as well as Khizr Khvajeh Khan seems to have spent much of their time wandering with what may be described as her peripatetic Mughal family home. 'She spent her childhood under her father's rule in Kabul and Hindustan; her girlhood and young wifehood shared the fall and exile of Humayun; and her maturity and failing years slipped past under the protection of Akbar', as her translator, Annette Beveridge, put it in 1902.<sup>31</sup>

Gulbadan Banu Begum was thus witness to the processes and mechanisms of a monarchy in the making, seeing it through many vicissitudes from the inception of the Mughal kingdom in the early conquests of Babur to its established splendour in Akbar's reign. She came to write about all this at the behest of her nephew, Akbar, whose efforts to consolidate and institutionalize Mughal power included the command that a comprehensive and authoritative official history be written of its early stages and of his reign.

Around 1587, when Akbar had commissioned an official history of his empire, the 'servants of the State' and 'old members of the Mughal family' were requested to write down or relate their impressions of earlier times.<sup>32</sup> Gulbadan herself reports, 'There had been an order issued, 'Write down whatever you know of the

doings of *Firdaus-makani* and *Jannat-ashyani*”.<sup>33</sup> ‘It was in obedience to this order that Bayazid Bayat, who was then holding an office in Akbar’s kitchen, dictated his memoirs to a clerk of Abu’l Fazl’, writes Henry Beveridge. ‘The same order produced the charming memoirs of Princess Gulbadan, Akbar’s aunt, and apparently also those of Jawhar, the ewer-bearer’.<sup>34</sup>

What Gulbadan wrote, however, was no panegyric. Her writing was markedly different from anything that others (servants or other members of the court) produced at the time. As the list of the sources for the *Akbarnama* shows, other informants wrote their accounts under the following genres: *tarikh*, a word referring to annals, history, or chronological narrative; *tazkireh*, written in the form of biographies and memoirs; *nameh*, included biographies and exemplary accounts, aside from histories, epistles, and accounts of exemplary deeds; *qanun*, written in the mode of normative accounts or legal texts; and *vagi`at* meaning a narrative of happenings, events, and occurrences.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, the genre title that Gulbadan chose was different from all of these: it was Ahval, a word meaning conditions, state, circumstances, or situations.<sup>36</sup> Does this title index a different conception of what a ‘history’ of the times should be?

It is not possible to give a straightforward answer to this question. We know little about the conditions of Gulbadan’s writing, what language she wrote in, or even whether she wrote her memoir in her own hand or dictated it to a scribe. Did she write in Turkish or Persian? We know from her own account that she had arrived in Agra at the age of six-and-a-half and, except for brief interludes, stayed on in Hindustan. Turkish was her native language, and one finds many Turkish words in her account. But from Humayun’s time on, the influence of Persian had clearly increased in the Mughal court.<sup>37</sup> Gulbadan Begum, his sister, is very likely to have learnt the language as she grew up in these surroundings. Indeed, two lines of poetry by her in Persian are preserved in the work of Mir Mahdi Shirazi.<sup>38</sup> The very choice of Gulbadan to write a memoir of the times suggests she was recognized to be ‘learned’<sup>39</sup>; the Persian verse attributed to her is further testimony to her standing in this respect.

A further disadvantage is that only one copy of Gulbadan’s *Ahval* survives today.<sup>40</sup> It is incomplete, ending abruptly some



three years before Akbar's accession. We do not know what models Gulbadan drew upon to write her own text. It certainly does not appear to adhere to any available format, differing markedly in this respect from most Mughal court chronicles of the time.

Gulbadan does seem to have read some contemporary memoirs and chronicles of the kings. Her father Babur wrote an unusual autobiography, which she read.<sup>41</sup> However, as we can tell from her *Ahval*, the *Baburnama* was not the literary model for it. Annette Beveridge informs us that the Begum had a copy of Bayazid Bayat's *Tazkireh-i Humayun va Akbar* in her library. Beveridge also found a copy of Khvandamir's *Qanun-i Humayuni*, inscribed with the Begum's name.<sup>42</sup> However, she did not imitate the styles of either of these accounts, which were in any case contemporaneous with her own, and thus perhaps unavailable at the time of her writing.

Whatever we may conclude about the problems of authorship, and of personal memory, given the uncertainties surrounding the Begum's memoir, one thing is clear. If most chronicles of the age aimed to be authoritative histories in the manner of the generic histories of rulers,<sup>43</sup> Gulbadan moved away from this genre to produce an account of far more 'modest' incidents in the lives of Babur and Humayun. Her account of the everyday lives of this royal family in peripatetic circumstances is a unique piece of writing. Gulbadan creates an unusual space in her writing, and helps to compose a different picture of many areas of Mughal life about which we know very little from other sources.

Before I go on to illustrate the unusual character of this source, a brief description of the contents and the organization of *Ahval* is necessary. What we have today of the memoir is divided into two parts. The second part, dealing with Humayun's reign, breaks off abruptly after a discussion of the event concerning the blinding of the king's step-brother (his incessant rival to the Mughal throne) Mirza Kamran. In the first part of her memoir, Gulbadan discusses the period of her father, Babur's life. Here, she produces detail quite similar to that contained in Babur's autobiography, about his wanderings in parts of Afghanistan, and Hindustan, his wars and victories at the time, and the early years of his establishment of Mughal rule in Hindustan. The specialty of the Begum's memoir, however, is to be found in the pictures she

provides of her father's 'home' life: extensive information about his marriages, his wives and children, his relationships with his kith and kin, especially the senior women of the Mughal lineage, and so on. The memoir in fact is remarkable not only for this rare account of domestic life, but also for the complexity that the author brings out in those episodes that are discussed in other chronicles of the time. To take one example: Gulbadan's list of the presents that Babur sent to his relatives in Afghanistan after his initial victory in Hindustan, is an extraordinary inventory not only for its detailing of his relatives and other close associates, but also for bringing to life the correct deportment in the preparation of presents and the manner of accepting them – so central to the sensibilities of this world.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, Babur makes only a casual, and far less interesting, mention of the presents in his autobiography.

The second part of Gulbadan's memoir begins on the 19<sup>th</sup> folio with her brother, Humayun's reign. Here too, aside from a discussion of the king's expeditions and reconquest of Hindustan, the memoir provides other kinds of historical data. For example, we learn of Mughal women lost during wars, and of Akbar's birth in the harsh circumstances of Humayun and Hamideh Banu Begum's itinerant life. The Begum's reminiscences of royal women's articulations about how they should marry are telling. So is her elaboration of Humayun's frequent visits to the senior women of the family, and the tension that arose between him and his wives owing to these continual visits. Add to these, the impressive detail provided of the celebrations and feasts held by the senior women on occasions such as Humayun's accession, and at the time of his step-brother Mirza Hindal's wedding, and we have a lost world of courtly life in camp discussed by the Begum in a way that no other chronicler of the time manages to do.

Let me now quote two short extracts in which Gulbadan writes of the varied roles and activities of the women of the Mughal household. In the following episode, she discusses the time Humayun spent with the women of the family when the court was settled for some time in Agra:

On court days [*ruzhaye divan*], which were Sundays and Tuesdays, he used to go to the other side of the river. During stay in the garden, *ajam* (Dil-dar Begam) and my sisters and the ladies (*haraman*) were often in

his company. Of all the tents, Ma'suma Sultan Begam's was at the top of the row. Next came Gul-rang Begam's, and *ajam's* was in the same place. Then the tent of my mother, Gul-barg Begam, and of Bega Begam, and the others. They set up the offices (*kar-khaneha*) and got them into order. When they had put up the pavilions (*khaima*) and tents (*khar-gah*) and the audience tent (*bar-gah*), the emperor came to see the camp and the splendid set-out, and visited the Begams and his sisters. As he dismounted near Ma'suma Begam's (tent), he honoured her with a visit. All of us, the begams and my sisters were in his society. When he went to any begam's or sister's quarters, all the begams and all his sisters used to go with him.<sup>45</sup>

Note the careful attention paid to precise rules: designated days to go to the other side of the river, arrangements of the tents of women, or the *padshah* himself coming to see the first arrangement, the manner of visitation, the *adab* (correct deportment) of accompaniment, and so forth.

In another description of the role of the *haraman* (women of the *haram*), the Begum recounts an episode that occurred during the period when Humayun was on the run owing to the challenge of the Afghan ruler Sher Shah. Humayun's movements through various parts of Hindustan and Central Asia at this time were complicated by the struggle for power with his own stepbrothers (a conflict which continued for the most part of their lives). In this conflict, Mirza Kamran and Mirza Askari, his two stepbrothers, were often accomplices.

At one point during this struggle, Mirza Kamran suggested to Askari that they should work together to take Qandahar from Mirza Hindal, the third stepbrother of Humayun. On hearing of what was transpiring, Humayun approached Khanzadeh Begum, his paternal aunt (sister of Babur), and requested her to go to Qandahar to advise Mirza Hindal and Mirza Kamran that since the threat of the Uzbiks and Turkmans (rival clansmen) was great, it was in their best interests to be friends among themselves. Khanzadeh Begum traveled from Jun to Qandahar, and Kamran arrived there from Kabul. Mirza Kamran urged Khanzadeh Begum to have the *khutba* read in his name. As regards the matter of

*khutba*, he also wrote to Hindal's mother (and his stepmother) Dildar Begum, who suggested he asked Khanzadeh Begum, their elder kinswoman, 'the truth about the *khutba* [*haqiqate khutbeh*]'. When Kamran finally spoke with Khanzadeh Begum, she advised him thus: '... as his Majesty *Firdaus-makani* [Babur] decided it and gave his throne to the Emperor Humayun, and as you, all of you, have read (*khandeh-id*) the *khutba* in his name till now, so now regard him as your superior and remain in obedience to him'.<sup>46</sup>

These two extracts, picked almost at random, reveal a *haram* far different from that commonly presented, even in recent academic accounts.<sup>47</sup> The first says something about the manner in which the Mughal *padshah* spent time with his women; the density of relationships and the sense of community that emerges is noteworthy. The second describes a woman in the sixteenth century playing a key role in the reading of the *khutba* – the decree for the proclamation of a new kingship. These two extracts from Gulbadan's *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah* are enough to indicate the kinds of questions that the text immediately raises, and that it is necessary for us to ask – and if possible answer – about the imbrication of the Mughal 'domestic' world in the everyday life of the courts and kings, or equally, the imbrications of courts and kings in the everyday life of the 'domestic' world.

To explore the point about the potential for raising newer questions through a source like Gulbadan's memoir, let me consider two more extracts in some detail. In addition to demonstrating the memoir's rare contents, these extracts should also flag its unusual character, derived from allusions to the very process at work in the making of the Mughal monarchy and its history. The extracts that I consider here deal with the place and meanings of negotiation in a royal marriage, the meanings of birth, and the definition of 'seniority'. As the language of Gulbadan's memoir suggests, all these can be seen to have far more complicated and contested meanings and implications in the early Mughal world than the available literature would lead us to believe.

In the midst of a protracted war between Humayun and his stepbrother Kamran, there was a brief settlement when Humayun permitted Kamran to march to Kabul and he himself left for Bikaner. At Pat, Humayun's stepmother Dildar Begum organized an entertainment 'at which all the ladies of the court were present'.

Amongst these was Hamideh Banu Begum, the daughter of the preceptor of another of his stepbrothers, Mirza Hindal. Humayun made enquiries about her and decided to marry her. On hearing this, Mirza Hindal is reported to have said: 'I thought you came here to do me honour, not to look out for a young bride...'. This displeased Humayun, and he left. Dildar Begum then patched up matters: 'you [Hindal] are speaking very improperly to his Majesty, whom you ought to consider as the representative of your late father'. The Begum gave 'a nuptial banquet' the next day, 'after which she delivered the young lady to his Majesty, and gave them her blessing'. Humayun and Hamideh then proceeded to Bhakkar.<sup>48</sup>

Mirza Hindal's response to Humayun's expressed desire to marry Hamideh Banu, and Dildar Begum's firm chiding of Hindal are both statements against the supposed *bi-adabi* (bad behavior, lack of good breeding and refinement)<sup>49</sup> of two people. They point to the importance of correct behavior in the matter of seeking brides and making marriages.

The above account is taken from the *Tazkirat-ul-vaqi`at*, memoirs of Humayun *padshah* recorded by his servant, Jawhar. However, the same affair is given a somewhat different rendering in Gulbadan Banu Begum's *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah*. Although the detail concerning Hindal and Humayun's argument over Hamideh Banu and that of Dildar Begum's intervention up to the point of marriage is almost identical, what Jawhar's memoir does not indicate is that Hamideh, in fact, initially refused to be married to Humayun. According to Gulbadan, she objected when she was invited to Dildar's quarters on Humayun's insistence: 'If it is to pay my respects, I was exalted by paying my respects the other day. Why should I come again?' Dildar Begum advised her, 'After all you will marry someone. Better than a king who is there?' Hamideh's response was: 'Oh yes, I shall marry someone; but he shall be a man whose collar my hand can touch, and not one whose skirt it does not reach'.<sup>50</sup>

One may see Hamideh's reluctance as a part of a continuous debate, indeed a tension, in matters of appropriate behavior in the lives of people at the court. In one of the communications that Hamideh sent to the emperor, she said: 'To see kings once is lawful; a second time it is forbidden. I shall not come'. It is precisely conduct, or rather the question about proper conduct, that is raised

and to which Humayun must attend. Humayun responded to the concern implicit in Hamideh's refusal to visit him a second time: 'If she is not a consort [*na-mahram-and*], we will make her a consort [*mahram misazim*]'.<sup>51</sup> He then married her.

The marriage of Humayun and Hamideh Banu is an interesting example of organization and 'control' in marriages. Women's choice in matters of matrimony reflects their concern for whom they married and, importantly in the Timurid-Mughal context, their attention to genealogy and dynasty.<sup>52</sup> In this instance the negotiation of marriage is especially striking for the careful attention paid to tradition and protocol, and to the minute rules of social interaction – the number of times it was legitimate to visit a king, and the importance of making a marriage, even when a *padshah* desired to take a woman.

The following passage evokes early Mughal life in the time of Humayun, when he was trying to retain and expand his father's territories in India. The episode concerns questions regarding his marriage and heirs. Gulbadan reports:

My lady, who was Maham Begam, had a great longing and desire to see a son of Humayun. Wherever there was a good-looking and nice girl, she used to bring her into his service. Maywa-jan, a daughter of Khadang (? Khazang), the chamberlain (*yasawal*), was in my employ. One day (after) the death of his Majesty *Firdaus-makani*, my lady said: 'Humayun, Maywa-jan is not bad. Why do you not take her into your service?' So, at her word, Humayun married and took her that very night.

Three days later Bega Begam came from Kabul. She became in the family way. In due time she had a daughter, whom they named 'Aqiqa. Maywa-jan said to Lady (Aka) Maham Begam, 'I am in the family way, too'. Then my lady got ready two sets of weapons, and said: 'Whichever of you bears a son, I will give him good arms'. Then she packed up the arms, and got ready gold and silver walnuts. She procured also the (special) arms of a Mughal commander, and was very happy, and kept saying: 'Perhaps one of them will have a son'. She kept watch till Bega Begam's 'Aqiqa was

born. Then she kept an eye on Maywa-jan. Ten months went by. The eleventh also passed. Maywa-jan said: 'My maternal aunt was in Mirza Ulugh Beg's *haram*. She had a son in the twelfth month; perhaps I am like her'. So they sewed tents and filled pillows. But in the end everyone knew she was a fraud.<sup>53</sup>

'My lady Maham Begam, had a great longing and desire to see a son of Humayun', Gulbadan tells us. In this Mughal world, as elsewhere, it was the role of the younger wives to produce heirs: in their turn, at a later stage, they themselves instructed younger wives about such responsibilities. This duty of elder women to advise the young and of the young to carry forward the name of the family through reproduction was of no small moment in the Timurid-Mughal world. Miveh-jan and her 'services' would fit this tradition. The production of royal children was a much-desired event: for such an esteemed birth meant the perpetuation of the eminent Timurid-Mughal family. The task was especially crucial in the time of Babur and Humayun when the risk of the disappearance of the family was very real. This was owing to the Uzbek threat that Babur faced in Central Asia, and later due to the Afghan challenge encountered by Humayun in Hindustan. The urgent requirement in these situations was the preservation of the lineage and, to achieve that, marriages and the birth of children was essential. This was especially difficult and at the same time crucial in a perpetually embattled situation where the camp was constantly on the move. It was in this context that Maham Begum made the point about male heirs. She looked for wives for Humayun for the momentous task of producing heirs to the throne.<sup>54</sup>

There were many different kinds of royal women, and they worked in different ways to preserve the lineage and its practices. The senior women made dynastic linkages through marriages; in those marriages the name of the Timurid-Mughals was carried forward by young wives (like Hamideh Begum, Bigeh Begum, and Miveh-jan) who produced heirs. The function required of senior women was neither sexual nor reproductive; but as young mothers, these senior women too had been expected to give birth to children. Tradition was preserved (and perpetuated) by their bodily, reproductive functions, but also by their role as elders and advisers – inheritors and transmitters of tradition, in both roles.

Against the background of these fragments from the *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah*, it is possible to consider the way of life of the early Timurid-Mughals and the conditions of their peripatetic domestic lives. An analysis of the roles and positions of the members of this domestic world allows us to explore the meanings of relationships among Mughal men and women, which were extremely varied, mostly hierarchical, at times imbued with conflict, and in other contexts displaying diverse forms of community. Different kinds of relationships are seen in the participation of women and men in the making of marriages, in festivities and other celebrations, and the observance of customs and rituals at births and deaths and more everyday occasions. It is through an examination of these moments and happenings that we are likely to be able to delineate forms of Mughal sociability as well think through other categories like those of motherhood and wifehood, for instance, the ways in which marriages were effected (and why in those ways), and similarly the prevailing notions of duty, loyalty, and love.<sup>55</sup>

Gulbadan's memoir thus helps us question many of the assumptions that have commonly been made about the Mughal world – in both its public and domestic domains. In the case of the latter, our understanding has been collapsed into the stereotypical image of something called the *haram*. The memoir on the other hand takes us through the complex set of relations in which women of the nobility were involved in the domestic sphere. It points to the public-political affairs that were necessarily conducted here as well as in the courts; and through all this to the very different meanings attaching to family, married life, and domestic affairs in this 16<sup>th</sup> century world. Thus the domestic world of the early Mughals may be imagined as a domain in which many different kinds of duties and activities, bonds of solidarity, notions of sexuality, questions of reproduction and reproductive rights (and duties), varying states of celebration and joy, loss and grief, differing concepts of genealogy, and diverse traditions and practices come together.<sup>56</sup>

The very language of Gulbadan's text points to attributes of the domestic world of the early Mughals that have been insufficiently noticed. The vocabulary used to describe the kings' kin and associates illustrates the extent to which differences in the



physical, political, and cultural circumstances of the early Mughals affected their domestic relationships. Varied contexts and diverse units of reference are invoked in thinking of these relationships. Consider only a few of these terms, dispersed through the Begum's memoir: *ahl-u-`ayal*, *ahl-i Mughal*, *ahl-i haram*, *haraman va khishavandan*, *haraman-i padshah*, and *nasl-i Sahib Qiran*.

The first of these words (also often used by Babur in the *Baburnama*) is *ahl-u-`ayal*. *Ahl* means companion or relative, person, people of distinction, servant, and attendant: and in the plural (*kasan*), kinsmen (*khishavand*), relatives of men, race or tribe (*qawm*), friends (*payruvan*, *yanan*, *ashab*), or wife and children of someone (*ahl-i bayt-i kisi* or *zan-u-farzand-i kisi*). *Ayal* carries with it the connotation of dependency (*muhtaj*). It is used for person (s) living with a man, who bears his/her expenses: for example, a servant, a wife, or a small child. It is used thus for a *ghulam*, a slave, and servant.<sup>57</sup> By applying the above definition of *ahl* to *ahl-i Mughal*, the meaning we get is kinsmen, wives, children and dependants of the Mughals. Likewise, extending the meaning of *ahl* to *ahl-i haram*, the definition of the latter is, the people of the *haram*. *Haraman va khishavandan* implies kinsmen and women of the *haram* (in certain contexts used only in the relation to the wives); and *haraman-i padshah*, the wives of the king. *Nasl* of Sahib Qiran (Timur) incorporated children (*awlad*, *bachcheh*), descendants (*akhlaf*), and great grandchildren (*nabireh*). It implied the *khandan*, *dudman*, *dudeh*, and *pusht* (several generations).<sup>58</sup> *Khandan* means household or the family, to use Dehkhoda's translation. *Khandan* also carries the following meanings – *dudman* or genealogy, *tabar* or extraction, *dudeh* or genealogy.<sup>59</sup>

The words and phrases discussed above are far from being synonymous. Different terms are used in different contexts to refer to diverse conceptions of the Mughal family or community. For instance, a strong genealogical component is woven into Babur's conception of his kinfolk. Gulbadan quotes him saying as, '[w]hoever there may be of the family [*nasl*] of *Sahib-qiran* and Chingiz Khan (*az nasl-i Sahib Qiran*), let them turn towards our court'.<sup>60</sup> In Babur's own comment – 'For nearly a hundred and forty years the capital of Samarkand had been in our family [*khanivadeh*]'<sup>61</sup> – we come across another term, *khanivadeh*. This is a compound noun meaning *khandan*, carrying also with it

indications of *dudman*, *tabar*, or *dudeh*, as may be seen in Babur's statement above. It could also be used in the sense of 'pertaining to an illustrious family', 'familial' or *khanivadigi*. As a compound noun, *khanivar*, it means people of the same house.<sup>62</sup>

Even a brief review of this terminology is sufficient to jolt our long held assumptions about the life and spirit of Mughal women and men. At the very least, the diversity and variability of these terms should show that the fixed, unchanging, clearly demarcated *haram* of received Mughal historiography was hardly possible in Babur's and Humayun's peripatetic reigns. It is important to note that the term *haram* comes to be applied regularly to the royal women and their living quarters only in Akbar's time. It is only then that a clearly demarcated, 'sacred incarcerated' sphere emerges, as the space of the Mughal domestic world.<sup>63</sup>

### **Other sources in the light of Gulbadan's text**

If the multiplex character of Gulbadan's memoir opens some fascinating arenas for us, it also helps us read other Mughal chronicles very differently, for these too turn out to be richer in meaning and content than the historians have made them out to be.

In histories of the Mughals, there is a sharp focus on the personality and politics of the Mughal kings and their most prominent lieutenants. The emperor, his nobles and their political-administrative-military exploits are explored over and over again; other worlds are hardly even scratched. There are two problems that flow from this. First, as feminist writings have shown in so many other contexts, a large part of the human experience falls outside history. This happens partly because ordinary, everyday, 'domestic' events are not always documented by the state, or institutionalized in public archives. As a consequence, the account of the great historical changes and developments also fails to come to life. Few Mughal histories have been histories of people building lives, relationships, or domestic worlds; and, in a word, even the description of the momentous and the extraordinary sometimes becomes empty.

Gulbadan Begum's *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah* draws our attention to the importance of the quotidian at the very moment of extraordinary, momentous events. The challenge of her memoir

may be summed up in a number of ways. Perhaps the easiest point to note is that she raises important questions about life and activities in the household of the early Mughals: the place and meanings of negotiation in a royal marriage, the definition of seniority, the role and construction of tradition, lineage and so on. Gulbadan's text poses a second, and less obvious, challenge too. The Begum shows us the Mughal empire in a very different light from that of the official histories and much of its subsequent historiography. Her empire is not yet fully institutionalized. Though Gulbadan's text was actually used as a source for the official chronicle of Akbar's empire, interestingly it is her text, and not the imperial history, that tells us about the *making of the empire*. What the *Akbarnama* (and the *A'in-i Akbari*) provides is an institutionalized history of an empire already in place – fully formed, so to speak. Gulbadan's text, on the other hand, shows us the empire (and its history) *being formed*.

Thus her *Ahval* appears important in at least three ways. First, chronologically speaking, it evokes a powerful impression of an empire that is not already known or made, a political formation taking unsteady steps from infancy to maturity. Secondly, in terms of domestic manners and emotional life, the text provides much food for thought on the less tangible (and less documentable) aspects of Mughal history. Finally, on the question of history (and empire) itself, the text serves as a symbol of how official 'history' came to be written as part of the construction of an empire; of course, the Begum's memoir ended up in historiographical flotsam, suggesting both the entrenched politics and the machinations involved in the construction of historical archives.

Once we have been alerted to some of these hidden dimensions of Mughal history by a text like Gulbadan's, we discover that the canonical, mainstream sources long used by Mughal historians themselves yield information on many of these matters when we go to them with new questions: unusual and unexpected evidence on the rough and tumble of social life, on everyday struggles, fears and pleasures, on the construction of new subjectivities and new historical conditions.

After a brief tour of Gulbadan's text, it is interesting to refer to Abu'l Fazl's grand compendium, the *Akbarnama*, the place where we find detailed reference to a women's *hajj* (pilgrimage)

led by Gulbadan Begum herself. The exceptional character of this event – a *hajj* of women, initiated by a woman, and to a large extent organized by women – remains an unusual happening in the annals of high Mughal history. The *hajj* is remarkable precisely because it is a *women's hajj*; it tells us something about the process of the consolidation of a Muslim empire in South Asia. The women's *hajj* seems to be one of the major pietistic activities that Akbar supported during his reign, part of a whole series of moves that he and others in his court and household perhaps saw as necessary to the consolidation of a new Muslim empire in a predominantly non-Muslim land. We never hear of such an incident again in the reigns of Akbar's well-established successors.<sup>64</sup> Is this because they were already so well established? Or because the royal women, now better 'incarcerated', had far less opportunity to take exceptional initiatives and set off on such a pilgrimage? Indeed, the royal women's *hajj* led by Gulbadan comes as a startling discovery because, while the *Akbarnama* provides considerable detail about the *hajj*, historians have paid little or no attention to it.<sup>65</sup>

In a similar way, Gulbadan's memoir leads us to a set of new questions on the message of some of the miniature paintings made in Akbar's atelier.<sup>66</sup> Mughal miniatures are surely among the few documents that provide us with a rich body of materials for the study of the Mughal court and society. But even where their importance as sources has been recognized, the questions asked have been chiefly about processes of production, and about assigning authorship and dates; or, in the hands of a 'social historian' like K. S. Lal, about the 'reality' of these representations (do these miniatures stand for real Mughal women?). The fact is that these idealized, and stylized, representations – for that is what they are – still have much to tell us about hierarchies and relationships in the Mughal world.<sup>67</sup>

The royal atelier became a major department under Akbar; the production of miniatures as illustrations for manuscripts and other compendiums was part of the process of institutionalization that I have referred to above. These paintings are especially important in the light of the fact that Abu'l Fazl placed Akbar on an awesome pedestal in the authoritative *Akbarnama* – representing him as the all-powerful monarch at the helm of a new order. In

this new order, a world where the monarch innovatively proclaimed his superior position even in the organization of architectural space, the entire imperial domain, including the Mughal domestic world, would have provided a site for the display of the splendor of Akbar's supreme power. Interestingly, the matter appears in a more textured light in these contemporary visual illustrations, although Akbar may still seem to be at the helm of affairs. Even in the context of Akbar's newly consolidated grandeur, the other domains, as revealed through these paintings, do not automatically become a passive ground for the display of the new monarchical power. In these representations, the emperor by no means appears as the exclusive source of authority in the new political culture of the Mughal court. Rather, this visual representation seems to hint at continuing tensions flowing from the multiple bases of legitimacy and power.

For all their idealization, and attempt to elevate the emperor and his court, many of these paintings depict unusual situations in which Akbar is not always, and certainly not solely, the centre of life and energy. Let me refer to a couple of examples from a widely available catalogue put together by Andrew Topsfield, entitled *Indian Paintings from Oxford Collections*. In one painting from this collection, 'A Prince and a Maid with a Wine Cup', Topsfield suggests that the figures are most likely 'idealised types', though the prince resembles Akbar in early manhood.<sup>68</sup> Part of his description is worth noting: 'The pavilion behind, with its thin sandstone pillars, arabesque carpet, wine-flasks in niches, half-furled curtain and half-open door to an inner chamber, suggests a mood of amorous expectancy...'.<sup>69</sup> Although Topsfield accurately draws our attention to the mood of the painting, there is in fact more to be seen in this miniature. Here the maid is cast in a direct upstanding posture, holding the cup, and Akbar stands in a graceful, almost shy manner: he looks downward and his posture suggests delicacy and uncertainty. In this representation, no one central position of authority emerges clearly.

Or take a very different miniature from the same collection as above that depicts other layers of court society and activity. This one is entitled 'The Court Scene with Chaghatai Dancers'.<sup>70</sup> Andrew Topsfield reads this painting in the following way: 'A ruler, probably the young Akbar, receives two noblemen who are

introduced by an elderly courtier, beneath a richly ornate canopy. Attendants stand on either side, while in the foreground a spirited group of dancers and musicians provide the Emperor's entertainment'.<sup>71</sup> In fact, there are two parts to the painting. In the first, Akbar is shown seated on a raised platform, engaging with three men, as we can see from the gesture of his hand. The canopy above the three men, like the dais of the emperor and the raised pavilion in which he is seated, speaks of nobility and hierarchy. This upper portion of the painting seems to be demarcated from the rest of the folio by two men bearing different royal symbols. On the emperor's right hand side, next to the three nobles, stands a man with a falcon (a sign of kingship). Across from him stands another person with another regal symbol. Their presence divides the upper half of the image from the lower area where the Chaghatai dancers perform.

The gestures of the noblemen portrayed have a great deal to say about Mughal manners and decorum. Likewise, in the bottom half of the painting, where dance and music abound, performers, musicians, and other servants, like the ewer-bearer, speak of other moments in the life of the court. Although the emperor is the focal point in this painting, these zones of activities, it seems to me, can be read as metaphors for the many worlds of the emperor – worlds that relate to him but are not necessarily always concentrated upon him. Especially in the context of Akbar's reign, the question of many points of initiative remains an important one. For a more layered understanding of Mughal court and society, historians need to pay far closer attention to these kinds of illustrations, and the power and hierarchy symbolised in them.

Once such challenging complexities are noted in one set of materials, it is to be hoped that the historian would look at other texts, with a very different eye. European travellers' accounts, for example, another major source of information for historians of Mughal India, also contain unusual and valuable details on several aspects of Mughal social life and hierarchy. The point is to attend to them carefully because they depict social visions and contests in other interesting ways. Father Moserrate's 1580s account of Akbar's court, to refer to one example, like that of other travelers can be seen to be full of scandalous stories and hasty generalizations.<sup>72</sup> Witness his not so subtle observation that Akbar

had 'more than 300' wives and yet 'only five' children.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, he records that Akbar's mother, Hamideh Banu Begum, acted as the head of the province of Delhi, when he marched to Kabul in the late 1570s to suppress a conspiracy involving several rebels to install Mirza Hakim, the emperor's half-brother, as the ruler of Hindustan.<sup>74</sup> Add to this, his reference to the pilgrimage to Mecca undertaken by the women of Akbar's *haram* in 1578. As we have noted earlier, this pilgrimage was organized under the guidance of the emperor's aunt Gulbadan Banu Begum.<sup>75</sup> Both the latter episodes are remarkable examples of the high profile of the senior Mughal women, and the power they could sometimes attain – instances that are, interestingly, not detailed in any of the court chronicles of the time. This in itself should serve as sufficient invitation for us to explore further how European travelers' accounts might contribute to a better understanding of Mughal society and culture.

Thus, the easily available but neglected memoir of a Mughal princess enables us to raise questions about a Mughal 'becoming' that Mughal historians have all too often skirted. This relates both to the coming into being of an empire, and to the simultaneous institution of an archive. By making it possible for us to see how one of the most vaunted Mughal sources (the *Akbarnama*) came into being, rendering its own 'sources' peripheral as it did so, the memoir opens up the question of the *making* of sources, even as it raises questions about the assigned limits of Mughal history.

The Begum's text challenges some of Mughal historiography's most beloved propositions, such as the one that the sources are simply not available for this or that inquiry. Sensitized by the Begum's account of the struggles involved in the establishment of a new royal life and culture, one also learns what other ('central', official) frequently mined sources for a study of the times are capable of telling us about these very processes. For what Gulbadan's *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah* suggests very clearly indeed is the fact of the fluidity and contestation that went into the founding of this new polity in its new setting – not only its new power and grandeur, but also its new regulations and accommodations, its traditions and its hierarchies. Her writing points to the history of a subjectivity and a culture, of political

power and of social relationships, struggling to be born. Historians wishing to extend the frontiers of Mughal history cannot but ask, as part of this endeavor, for a more sustained history of everyday lives and associations based on sources like Gulbadan's memoir, but hardly on that alone.

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## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Among the classic works on political-administrative institutions, see the early works of Jadunath Sarkar, *Mughal Administration* (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1935); and *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vols. I-IV (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1932-50); R.P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration* (Allahabad: The India Press Ltd., 1936); S. R. Sharma, *Mughal Government and Administration* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1951); and more recent studies like M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966); John F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1979); and Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986). This has been by far the most popular area of historical writing. For some useful recent bibliographies, see John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Among the wide range of writings available on economic and social history in the context of agrarian relations, the following marked some important departures: Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963); S. Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973); Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605-1690: A Study in the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1962); Michael Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat: c. 1700-1750* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979); and for a general survey, Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol.1: c. 1200-c. 1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).



- 2 Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Pasts in Indian History c. 1500-1900* (New Delhi: Permanent Black and University of Washington Press, 2007).
- 3 When I began my research on the 'domestic world' of the Mughals, for example, a leading historian of medieval India asked me, 'How will you write a history of the Mughal domestic world? There are no sources for it'.
- 4 For a provocative statement on the colonial archive, see, Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Nicholas B. Dirks, 'Reading Culture: Anthropology and Textualization of India', in E. Valentine Daniel and Jeffrey M. Peck (eds.), *Culture/Contexture: Explorations in Anthropology and Literary Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 275-95. Also by the same author, 'Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive', in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspective on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 279-313; and 'Annals of the Archive: Ethnographic Notes on the Sources of History' in Brian Axel (ed.), *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and its Future* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). For different times and locales, see the comments on the making and use of archives in Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); and Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (trans. John and Anne Tedeschi; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
- 5 Maria Eva Subtelny, 'Art and Politics in Early 16<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia', *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 27, Nos.1-2 (1983), pp.131-2.
- 6 I have used the following Persian and English editions of the *Baburnama*. W. M. Thackston, trans. and ed. Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur Mirza: *Baburnama*, Parts I-III, Turkish transcription, Persian edition, and English translation (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1993); W.M. Thackston, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor* (Washington D.C: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Annette Susannah Beveridge, trans. *Babur-nama (Memoirs of Babur) of Zahiru'd-din Muhammad Babur Padshah Ghazi* (1921; reprint: Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1997); henceforth, Thackston, *Baburnama*; Thackston, *Memoirs*; and Beveridge, *Baburnama*.

Have this

- <sup>7</sup> Sir E. Denison Ross trans. and N. Elias (ed.), *The Tarikh-i Rashidi of Muhammad Haidar Dughlat: A History of the Moguls of Central Asia* (London, 1895).
- <sup>8</sup> M. Hidayat Hosain (ed.), *The Qanun-i Humayuni of Khwandamir*, Bibliotheca Indica series 260, No.1488 (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1940), Preface, i-ii. Hereafter Hosain, *Qanun-i Humayuni*.
- <sup>9</sup> Hosain, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, see, preface to the text.
- <sup>10</sup> The following translations of Khvandamir have been used in this paper: B. Prasad, 'A Note on the Buildings of Humayun', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 5, No. 20 (1939); 'Humayun-Nama of Khondamir', in H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, (ed.), *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. V (London: Trubner and Co., 1867-77); cited as Prasad, *Buildings*, and Elliot and Dowson, *Humayun-Nama*.
- <sup>11</sup> Hermann Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: H. Hart, 1903), p.222.
- <sup>12</sup> Jouher, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, trans. Major Charles Stewart (1832; reprint: Lucknow: Pustak Kendra, 1971); cited as Jouher-Stewart, *Tezkereh*. Mughal historians often make a mention of the exceptional detail of the Mughal peripatetic life portrayed in Jawhar's memoir. However, one does not find any reflection on the meaning of the Mughal family, or even the 'court', in these peripatetic circumstances.
- <sup>13</sup> B.P. Saxena, 'Baizid Biyat and His Work- 'Mukhtasar'', *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 4, parts 1-3 (1925-26): 43. Other Persian and English editions of Bayazid Bayat that I have used here are as follows: M. Hidayat Hosain (ed.), *Tadhkira-i Humayun wa Akbar of Bayazid Biyat* Bibliotheca Indica 264, no. 1546 (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1941); B. P. Saksena, 'Memoirs of Baizid', *Allahabad University Studies*, Vol. 6, part 1 (1930): 71-148; H. Beveridge, 'The Memoirs of Bayazid (Bajazet) Biyat', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 62, part 1-4 (1898): 296-316. These editions are cited as Saxena, *Mukhtasar*; Hosain, *Tadhkira*; Saksena, *Memoirs*; Beveridge, *Biyat*.
- <sup>14</sup> See, Abu'l Fazl `Allami, *Akbarnama*, Vols. I-III, H. Beveridge, trans., *The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl*, (1902-39; reprint: Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1993).
- <sup>15</sup> Abu'l Fazl `Allami, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vols. I-III, H. Blochmann and H. S. Jarrett, trans., *The A-in-i Akbari* (1873, 1894; reprint: Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society, 1993).

- <sup>16</sup> Abd al-Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Mawlawi Agha Ahmad (ed.) Bibliotheca Indica Series, cited in A'in-i Akbari, Vol. I; another edition is by George S.A. Ranking, W.H. Lowe and Sir Wolseley Haig, trans. and ed. *Muntakhab-ut-tawarikh*, Vols. I-III (1884-1925; reprint: Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1986).
- <sup>17</sup> Nizam al-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, Vols. I-III, B. De and Baini Prasad, trans., *The Tabaqat-i Akbari of Khwajah Nizamuddin Ahmad* (1936; reprint: Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1992).
- <sup>18</sup> Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography during the Reign of Akbar* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976).
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xvi.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.154, f.n. 1.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.
- <sup>23</sup> The *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyan* was composed early in the reign of Akbar. It is a history of Timur and his Mughal successors, down to the twenty-second year of Akbar's reign. The only copy of this manuscript is preserved in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, India. No recently published reproductions of the manuscript are available. During my research in Patna, I was told that the library does not allow photocopying, photography or any other form of duplication. Some of these miniatures, however, are available in a very small collection called *Timur Nama*, published by the Khuda Baksh Library itself. It consists of 11 illustrations. There is another black and white reproduction of all the folios, one that I chanced upon for the first time and brought to the notice of the librarian of the India Institute Library, Bodleian Library, Oxford: Wali al-Din Ahmad Khuda Baksh, *Descriptive List of the Photographic Reproductions of Illustrations from Three Persian Manuscripts in the Oriental Public Library at Bankipore* (1920).
- <sup>24</sup> Inayat-ul-lah Kanbo's *Takmila-i Akbarnama* is a detailed account of Akbar's reign from the forty-seventh year to his death, a continuation of Abu'l Fazl's *Akbarnama*. The text has been published on pp. 1206-62 of Beveridge's translation of *Akbarnama*, III. For details of the available editions of the *Takmila-i Akbarnama*, see, D.N. Marshall, *Mughals in India: A Bibliographical Survey of Manuscripts* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1967), p.203.
- <sup>25</sup> Shaykh Nur-al Haqq Dihlavi's *Zubdat-ut-Tavarikh*, is based on his father Abd-al Haqq Dihlavi's *Tarikh-i Haqqi* — a brief history of India from the time of Muhammad Ghuri to 1596 (Bodleian Library; Oxford, UK; Ouseley Ms. 59). The *Zubdat-ut-Tavarikh* is brought down to 1605. The MS. is available at Saraswati Bhavan Library,

Udaipur. For further references, see also, Marshall, *Mughals in India*, p.382.

<sup>26</sup> Amin Ahmad Razi's *Haft Iqlim*, a succinct work in connection with Agra, was composed in 1593-94. Amin Ahmad Razi was an independent author, not connected with the Mughal court. The work still remains unpublished except for a portion published in the *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta: Marshall), *Mughals in India*, p.71.

<sup>27</sup> Consider what Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi says in this regard: 'The foundations of any historical study of Akbar must rest solidly upon Abu-l-Fadl's *Akbarnamah*. It is full, detailed and mainly authentic, because it was written by a man who was fully familiar with the official policies and actions of the government and enjoyed not only confidence but actually the friendship of the emperor'. Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *Akbar: The Architect of the Mughul Empire* (1978; reprint: Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1987), pp.2, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Cf., in this context Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's observation: 'The mainstream has never run clean, perhaps never can. Part of mainstream education involves learning to ignore this absolutely, with a sanctioned ignorance'. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.2.

<sup>29</sup> Gulbadan Banu Begum, *Ahval-i Humayun Badshah*, British Library MS. Or.166; Annette Susannah Beveridge trans., *The History of Humayun: Humayun Nama* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1902; reprint: Delhi, Low Price Publications, 1994). Hereafter, the manuscript and the translation are cited as Gulbadan, *Ahval* and Beveridge, *Humayun*, respectively. For an early comment on Gulbadan's life, see, Annette Susannah Beveridge, 'Life and Writings of Gulbadan Begam (Lady Rosebody)', *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 106 (1892), pp.345-71. Hereafter, *Gulbadan Begam*.

<sup>30</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, pp.1, 8-9, 21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>32</sup> *Akbarnama*, I, 29. Abu'l Fazl's introduction to the *Akbarnama* is important in clarifying how the imperial history was commissioned.

<sup>33</sup> Babur and Humayun's posthumous names, meaning, 'dwelling' and 'nestling in paradise', Beveridge, *Humayun*, 83, and f. n. 1.; cf. Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 2b.

<sup>34</sup> Beveridge, *Biyat*, p.296.

<sup>35</sup> For the meanings of the words, see the following: S. Haim (ed.), *Dictionary English-Persian Persian-English* rev. ed.; F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed; and S. Haim,

*Shorter English Persian Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. 'tarikḥ', 'tazkireḥ', 'nameḥ', 'qanun', 'vaqi'at'.

<sup>36</sup> Steingass, *Persian*, 22; Haim, *Shorter Dictionary*, s.v. 'ahval'.

<sup>37</sup> Out of nearly a decade in exile, Humayun spent the major part of his time in Persia. On his re-conquest of Hindustan — it is widely known — he brought back fine Persian painters and litterateurs. The literate high culture of the Persian-speaking courts, especially Persian poetry had been a major source of admiration and a coveted art for many. Babur's autobiography and poetry marks these aspirations rather well (for a discussion of Babur's poetry and autobiography, see, Stephen F. Dale, 'The Poetry and Autobiography of the Babur-Nama', *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 55, No. 3 (August 1996), pp.635-64; also by him, 'Steppe-Humanism: The Autobiographical Writings of Zahir al-din Muhammad Babur, 1483-1530', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 22 (1990), pp.37-58. For the importance of Persian among the Muslim elite in India even in the pre-Mughal period, and its remarkable growth under the Mughals, see Muzaffar Alam, 'The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1998), pp.317-50.

Persian clearly emerged as the official language of the court under Akbar. The Jesuit fathers who visited the court of Akbar in the 1580s learnt basic Persian. All passages indicating their communication with the emperor highlight the fact that Persian was the means of communication between them. There are fascinating instances of the use of incorrect Persian by the priests, Akbar's amusement at it, and the presence of the interpreter in their exchanges with the emperor. The accounts also suggest that Akbar made most interventions and suggestions in Persian. The point regarding the observations of Jesuit fathers is that their writings tell us about the everyday usage and popularity of the language (see, J.S. Hoyland, trans., and S.N. Banerjee (ed.), *The Commentary of Father Monserrate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922); John Correia-Afonso (ed.), *Letters from the Mughal Court* (Bombay: Published for the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture by Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, *op.cit.*, p.76.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Beveridge's comment on Gulbadan's literacy: 'That Gulbadan Begam was a pen-woman, we know from her own words, and doubtless many other ladies of her day could write, for the *atun*, the teacher of reading, writing and embroidery, was a domestic personality named several times both by Babar and Gulbadan,' Beveridge, *Gulbadan Begam*, pp.346-7.

- <sup>40</sup> Annette Beveridge notes in 1925 in her private papers that her search for a second copy of the *Ahval* that began in 1902 was unsuccessful. Presumably a second copy was never found, for Beveridge never discusses this issue again. See, British Library, MSS Eur C176/221, 1-2. See also, M. A. Scherer, 'Woman to Woman: Annette, the Princess, and the Bibi', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1996), pp.208-9. Scherer discusses Henry Beveridge's unsuccessful trip to India in July 1899 in search for another version of the *Ahval*.
- <sup>41</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, p.83; cf. Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 2b. Annette Beveridge, the translator of the *Baburnama* suggests that it is known that Babur wrote his memoir in Turkish, but there is no evidence to confirm his chosen title. What survives are the Turkish and several Persian editions: the *Tuzuk-i Baburi*; the *Baburnama* (History of Babur), as it is most commonly called now; or the *Vaq'iat-i Baburi* (Babur's acts); see Beveridge, *Baburnama*, Preface, pp.xxxii-xxxiii, 'Problems of Titles'. (*Tuzuk* means 'regulation', 'order', 'arrangement', and was used specifically for a ruler's or officer's disciplined and orderly maintenance and deployment of his troops and staff'; see, W.M. Thackston, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India* (Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institute in association with Oxford University Press, New York, 1999), p.ix.
- <sup>42</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, op.cit., pp.76, 78.
- <sup>43</sup> See for instance, Bayazid Bayat's *Tazkireh-i Humayun va Akbar*, and Khvandamir's *Qanun-i Humayuni*.
- <sup>44</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, pp.94-6; Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 9b-10b.
- <sup>45</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, pp.129-30; Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 29b-30a.
- <sup>46</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, p.161; cf. Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 51b; see also, *Akbarnama*, I, pp.463-70.
- <sup>47</sup> As a classic example of the caricatured version of the Mughal harem, see, K.S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1988); and more recently the following conception of the harem in John F. Richards' volume in the Cambridge History of India series: 'Ideally, the harem provided a respite, a retreat for the nobleman and his closest male relatives - a retreat of grace, beauty, and order designed to refresh the males of the household;' *The Mughal Empire*, p.62.
- <sup>48</sup> Jouher-Stewart, *Tezkereh*, p.31.
- <sup>49</sup> Steingass, *Persian*, 213. See the several meanings of *bi-adab*, and its close synonyms, *bi-adabana*, *bi-adabi*, and the like. The word *bi-adabi* is used here especially in the context of Humayun's *padshahat* (rulership) where there is a rigorous emphasis on methods, codes,

and behavioural patterns. The word is a rather versatile one, and has varied implications according to situations, requirements and contexts. For a more general introduction to the meanings and implications of *adab*, especially in the context of South Asia, see the excellent volume edited by Barbara D. Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>50</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, pp.150-1; cf. Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 43a-43b.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151; cf. Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 43a. (Annette Beveridge gives the two Persian words of Gulbadan's as *na-mahram* and *mahram* simultaneously with the English translation. Beveridge does not give the words with their verbal endings. In the original Persian manuscript, Hamideh uses the term '*na-mahram-ast*' from the word '*mahram*', meaning unlawful, forbidden. Humayun uses '*mahram-and*' in the sense of spouse, which is the other meaning of '*haram*'. The following is a neatly summed up definition of *mahram*: 'Mahrem literally refers to intimacy, domesticity, secrecy, women's space, what is forbidden to a foreigner's gaze; it also means a man's family'. See, Nilufer Gole, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.7.

<sup>52</sup> I use the word Timurid-Mughal to underline Babur's concern; he continuously expressed in his memoir, to retain the link with his paternal forefather, Timur. He does not entirely do away with his familial connection with his maternal forefather, Chingiz Khan, yet his rivalry with his Uzbek clansmen perhaps required that he make a powerful declaration of his Timurid identity. I explore the details of this aspect of Babur's peripatetic life in my book in progress, 'The Domestic World of the Early Mughals of India'. It is also important in this instance to refer to the fact that there has been some debate, on the term 'Mughal' as an incorrect dynastic description for Babur's progeny: it is the 'mis-spelling of a misnomer' as Dale puts it (Dale, 'Poetry', pp.636-37, f.n.3). In Persian and Turkish, the word 'Mughul' or Mughal means Mongol, whereas Babur and his descendants identified themselves as Timurids. Dale suggests that given the generalised use of Mughals for South Asian Timurids, it might help to adopt John Richards' compromise, and with a modification of the spelling, refer to Babur's dynasty as the Timurid-Mughuls (Dale, *Ibid.*).

<sup>53</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, 112-13; cf. Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo.21b-22a.

<sup>54</sup> In the memoir, the conversation between Maham Begum and others is placed two years after Babur's death (1532). This conversation follows Humayun's return to Agra after defeating two distinguished

Afghan chiefs and supporters of the 'fallen' Lodi dynasty, at a place called Daura on the Gomti River (Beveridge, *Humayun*, p.112, f.n. 1). Following this victory, Humayun went to Chunar, captured it as well, and then returned to Agra (Beveridge, *Humayun*, 111-12, and fns.1 and 2; Gulbadan, *Ahval*, fo. 21b).

<sup>55</sup> I discussed these questions in my doctoral thesis, 'The 'Domestic World' of the Mughals in the Reigns of Babur, Humayun, and Akbar, 1500-1605' (University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 2000), now being revised for publication. See also, my, 'The 'Domestic World' of Peripatetic Kings: Babur and Humayun, c. 1494-1556', *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 4, No.1 (2001): pp.43-82.

<sup>56</sup> While the term domestic is also used widely especially in anthropological literature to refer to women's domain, the familial, and the household, it is still used primarily in a commonsensical fashion and has not become loaded with the kind of intellectual baggage (and criticism) now applied to terms like public/private, family, or *haram*. Therefore domestic seems a somewhat more neutral term with which to begin this investigation of a domain that has not been properly conceptualized, and has no well articulated name or boundaries. I use the term domestic not to eventually search for an indigenous equivalent but to open the question of thinking another time and another culture – in terms that are not foisted upon it.

<sup>57</sup> Aliakbar Dehkhoda, *Loghatname, 1879-1955, Encyclopedic Dictionary*, Vols. I-XIV, Mohammad Mo'in and Ja'far Shahidi, eds. (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Intisharat va Chap-i Danishgah-i Tihiran: ba hamkari-i Intisharat-i Rawzanah, 1993-94); III, 3149, and X, 14517. Hereafter, *Loghatname*. For the meanings of the term *kisan* and *khishavand*, also see, S. Haim, *The Shorter Persian-English Dictionary*; and Steingass, *Persian*. Babur uses the term to incorporate mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers (and the paternal equivalents), wives, and kinsmen. *Ahl-u-'ayal*, thus encompasses for him a sense of an entourage of generational relations. He also includes in this expression the wives of his men, and dependants like children and servants.

<sup>58</sup> *Loghatname*, XIII, p.19860.

<sup>59</sup> *Loghatname*, I, pp.82-98.

<sup>60</sup> Beveridge, *Humayun*, 97; cf. Gulbadan, *Ahval*. fo. 11a.

<sup>61</sup> Thackston, *Baburnama*, pp.170-71.

<sup>62</sup> *Loghatname*, I, pp.82-98.

<sup>63</sup> For an elaboration of these propositions, see my dissertation cited in note 55.



- <sup>64</sup> Although people continued to perform the *hajj* under the later Mughals, the extraordinary venture of a group of royal women going on a pilgrimage was never to be witnessed again. For details of *hajj*, under the Mughals, see, Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca*; especially the chapter: 'The Mughals and the Hajj'.
- <sup>65</sup> The single mention of Gulbadan Begum in John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (1993), appears in a reference to the women's *hajj*. However, the whole pilgrimage is represented as the initiative of the emperor Akbar, and completely misses the initiative of the Begum. A similar review of Gulbadan's *hajj*, hinging upon the enterprise and centrality of the emperor, may be seen in Michael N. Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience 1500-1800* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), see especially, pp.109, 118-20.
- <sup>66</sup> K.S. Lal, *Mughal Harem*, 14-16. For a parallel call to look at miniatures paintings more critically, see, Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Reading for Gender through Qajar Painting' in Diba and Ekhtiar, *Royal Persian Paintings*, see specially, p.77.
- <sup>67</sup> It is perhaps unnecessary to add that, while these miniatures might have been representations of 'reality', we cannot assume a principle of mimesis at work here.
- <sup>68</sup> Ms. Douce Or..b.1 f.6v, reprinted in Andrew Topsfield, *Indian Paintings from Oxford Collections* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum in association with the Bodleian Library, 1994), 10. The title of the painting discussed above is taken from this book, p.12.
- <sup>69</sup> Topsfield, *Indian Paintings*, p.12.
- <sup>70</sup> Ms. Douce Or.b.1, f.12b, reprinted in Topsfield, *Indian Paintings*, 10.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> Father Monserrate was one of the three members of the first Jesuit Mission that arrived at Akbar's court in 1580. He wrote his observations in the form of a diary, see, Hoyland and Banerjee, *Commentary*.
- <sup>73</sup> *Commentary*, p.205.
- <sup>74</sup> *Commentary*, pp.74-5.
- <sup>75</sup> *Commentary*, pp.166-7, 205, f.n. 255.

# **The Study of Sufism in Medieval India: An Overview**

***Raziuddin Aquil***

## **Early Sufism**

Emerging in Iraq in the latter half of the ninth century CE, Sufism developed as a significant religious and intellectual movement, which came to enjoy a wide following and considerable political clout in Islamic societies through the middle ages, notwithstanding oppositions and hostilities over its many complex ideas and doctrines as well as crucial social and political interventions. The critical early phase of Sufism from the ninth to the twelfth centuries not only saw its spread to a vast geographical expanse, with regions of Khurasan and Transoxania emerging as major centres of activities, but also witnessed the formulation of Sufi discipline and practices (centrality of the love for Allah, following the path of Prophet Muhammad, spiritual practices including a blend of music, poetry and dance called sama', miracles and sainthood, etc.). This was the period when many forms of Islam – legal schools (*mazahib*) and sects (*firqas*) – emerged through bitter contestations on which one was the most righteous one and could lead Muslims through the straight path of Allah as guided by the Prophet. Despite appearing to be withdrawing from the ways of the world, Sufis were important participants in much of the debate on what it meant to be a pious Muslim.<sup>1</sup> The origin of the word, Sufi, itself was possibly derived from *suf*, a kind of coarse woollen garment that the early mystics wore.

With key figures like, Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz (d. circa 899), Abu'l Husayn al-Nuri (d. 907-08) and Abu'l Qasim al-Junayd (d. 910), located in Baghdad in the latter half of the ninth century, Sufism grew as a distinct mode of piety: meditation for experiential knowledge of God (*ma'rifat*) and his unity (*tauhid*), spiritual experience of the passing away of self-consciousness (*fana*), maintaining sobriety (*sahw*), despite extraordinary feelings of being close to God, and showing the way to others through the mystic path (*tariqat*). Despite occasional setbacks such as the

shocking execution of al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj in 922, which had more to do with a political intervention that went awry than merely spiritual remarks of heretical nature, Sufis not only emerged in a big way, but were also going to travel all around the Muslim dominion and beyond.

Large swathes of territories in Iran and Central Asia were already home to a vibrant tradition of mystical thought and practice. Even though the term Sufi was not yet used in distant locations like Khurasan and Transoxania, many features were common to the mystic fraternities of 'metropolitan' Baghdad and those of 'provincial' centres. However, by the beginning of the tenth century the term Sufi had begun to be used and distinctions and differences of approach were reflected in a perceptive near contemporary observation: 'Sufism of Khurasan is practice and no talk; Sufism of Baghdad is talk and no practice; Sufism in Basra is talk as well as practice; and Sufism in Egypt is no talk and no practice'.<sup>(2)</sup> It is interesting to see that some stereotypes were already beginning to be formed.

The tenth century saw Baghdad-style Sufism develop firm roots in Khurasan and Transoxania in the east and also possibly spread to Iberia in the west. The process of 'merger' and 'fusion', between local and regional forms and a more 'cosmopolitan urban' synthesis, can be seen in the 'absorption' of the Path of Blame (Malamatiyya) by Sufism.<sup>3</sup> The tenth century also witnessed interesting struggles between the ascendancy of Iraqi Sufism and its compromises in the regions. This process eventually led to the formation of communities with distinct spiritual lineages (silsilas), doctrines and practices built around Sufi masters (shaikhs/murshids) and their close disciples (murids) lodged in hospices (khanqahs/ribats). The rise of such tightly-knit communities of Sufis got entangled with the cult of popular saints in Islam. The Sufis, as friends (auliya) of God, came to enjoy the status of the best of the saints and became major social and political players through the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even as many of their activities were viewed with suspicion by theologians and were attacked by antagonists of different hues.

The Sufi fraternities themselves guarded their activities and articulated their beliefs in a variety of literature, pointing to significant intellectual connections and lineages. The specialized

literature highlighted the primacy of the Sufi mode of piety over all other forms of religiosity in early Islam. It drew the normative boundaries of 'true Sufism' to distinguish it from 'fake', 'false' or 'misguided' forms of mystical movements. It also served to preserve and propagate the legacy of the early masters and called for solidarity within 'Sufi communities through shared discourses of theoretical and practical guidance'.<sup>4</sup> The vast composition and rapid dispersal of Sufi literature may also be understood in the context of Sufism responding to the questions raised by, and adjusting to the pressures from, not only the rationalist Mu'tazila and the legitimist Shi'as, but also the extremely competitive and watchful juridical schools (*mazahib*) within Sunnite Islam.

Typically, Sufis began with shunning all the anxieties of attachment to this world, whether private or public. They called for soul searching, remembrance of God beyond the ritual prayers of the mosques, meditation in solitude and wandering around as dervishes to the Muslim cities and non-Muslim or semi-Islamized hinterlands. At the end of it, they came back with claims of personally experiencing the truth of Islam, of the loving God and the righteousness of the path of the Prophet (strengthening here the position of the Sunnite '*ulama*'). As religious exemplars, then, Sufis were supposed to guide Muslims, ignoring or tolerating human weaknesses, and also bring non-Muslims to the fold of Islam. Thus, Sufism was a major strand in Islam before it came to the subcontinent.

*Sufism a major strand in Islam before it came to the subcontinent -*

### Coming of Sufism to the subcontinent

Of the Sufi orders that had emerged, four of them enjoyed considerable importance in India. While Chishtis and Suhrawardis flourished in the Sultanate period, the other two, Qadiris and Naqshbandis, became significant in Mughal India. To start with, the living Sufi master guided followers or visitors at his hospice, but later the shrines (*dargahs*) of Sufis of the previous generations became important and grew into places of pilgrimage, eventually carving a whole sacred geography of Sufism, called *wilayat*, which involved a lot of struggle and competition for control of territory, followers and resources, as we shall see further below.

What distinguished Sufism from other forms of Islam was its belief that a human soul could achieve union with God, a belief

Contradictions between  
Hanafi ulama and  
Sufism

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later formulated in the doctrine of wahdat-ul-wujud (unity of existence, or monism as a reality) by the thirteenth century Iberian Sufi master Ibn-i-Arabi. This doctrine often brought Sufis into conflict with Islamic orthodoxy (represented by the Sunni Hanafite 'ulama of the Delhi Sultanate). The term 'orthodoxy' is being used here for the group of 'ulama, often referred to as the 'ulama-i-su, or worldly 'ulama, who insisted on implementing the Sunni Hanafite interpretation of Islam in Muslim public life and sought to use political power for the purpose. They believed that God was unique and, therefore, to suggest that a human soul could achieve union with God was to imply that there was no distinction between God and beings. It is for this reason that Sufis were occasionally attacked and persecuted. Sufis were also targeted by the 'ulama for their occasional indifference to formal religious practices such as regular congregational prayers (namaz/salat), instead focusing on meditation and spiritual exercises which included music. The legitimacy of the latter, that is, listening to music in 'sama or qawwali, was a major source of confrontation between the 'ulama and Sufis (more on this see below).

Sufi  
contribution  
to growth  
of vernacular  
literature

The Sufis played a significant role in the growth and development of the vernacular literature (Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Deccani, etc.). By contrast, the court culture facilitated the spread and dominance of Persian as the language of power and government, though Sufis also left a large corpus of their literature in Persian. The Sufis' contribution to the spread of poetry and music is equally notable. Despite oppositions from sections of the 'ulama, Sufi orders such as the Chishtis used song and dance techniques of concentration and for creating spiritual ecstasy. Sufism, therefore, contributed greatly to the development of both Indian folk and classical culture.

wahdat  
- way  
towards  
Sufism  
to

non-muslim  
strands  
of religiosity

The belief in wahdat-ul-wujud and several forms of meditation brought the Sufis spiritually very close to certain strands of non-Muslim religious traditions in the Indian subcontinent. For example, Advaita Hinduism claimed that atma (a human soul) and paramatma (God) were one and the same, a theory similar to wahdat-ul-wujud. Also, Sufis found much to learn from Hindu spiritual disciplines such as yoga, which influenced their techniques of meditation. Mention may be made here of the popular practice of pranayam, breath control, and the more

Advaita  
Hinduism  
alternately yoga  
and breath  
control

spectacular *chilla-i-makus*, hanging oneself upside down with a branch of tree on the mouth of a well, though generally conducted in private and in the darkness of night.<sup>5</sup>

*Influence of both Hindu and Islamic*  
If Sufis learnt from non-Muslim traditions, the local, Indic, traditions were also powerfully affected by the principles of Islam as represented by Sufi saints. In the teachings of Kabir and Guru Nanak one can see the clear imprint of Sufi Islam. The criticism of idol worship, of 'useless' ritual, emphasis on equality, worship of and excessive devotion for one God, are all to be traced to Sufism. In the case of Sikhism, whole sections of the *Guru Granth Saheb* are borrowed from Sufi poetry. Sikhism's later hostility towards Islam notwithstanding, Sufism's greatest contribution to Indian culture is considered to be the example it set in the field of religious and cultural co-existence. Sufi orders showed that Muslim and non-Muslim religious traditions could prosper side by side and learn from each other.

*conversion*  
The closeness to non-Muslim traditions helped Sufis play an important role in conversion and Islamicization, even if many of them may not be working with an explicit agenda of this kind. Yet the presence of Sufis was the main factor in the conversion of large sections of the subcontinent's population to Islam. To start with, Sufi institutions, *khanqahs/jama'at-khanas/dargahs*, became centres where Muslims and non-Muslims gathered for worship, meditation or spiritual experience and sought blessings and benediction from Sufi masters. The process of conversion started with devotion towards a particular Sufi, leading to the emergence of syncretic sects, symbolizing only half or partial conversion. Eventually, there emerged communities of Muslims who professed Islam formally, but continued with their practice of local customs and traditions, which were condemned by the puritanical, reformist Islam. Reformist movements have gained ground particularly from eighteenth-nineteenth century onwards. However, it may be noted that Indian Sufism made a significant contribution through the reformist Naqshbandi Sufi Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi's development of the idea of *wahdat-us-shuhud* (feeling of monism as a mystic experience) in opposition to the more widely acceptable *wahdat-ul-wujud*, monism as a reality, as we shall further see below.

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The '*ulama*'s attitude towards Sufi orders was generally hostile, for the former considered many Sufi ideas and practices as heretical from the point of view of their own interpretation of the *shari'at*, Islamic law. Even as the '*ulama* in India were concerned with guarding orthodoxy than spreading Islam and their contact with non-Muslims was limited and perhaps unproductive, the role played by the Sufis in conversion and Islamicization was not counted as important by the '*ulama* for they thought that the quality of Islam practiced and preached by the Sufis was inadequate and inferior. In fact, certain groups of politically influential '*ulama* attacked many Sufi practices, condemning them to be un-Islamic. For this purpose, they often used political power also.

It is generally suggested that the relationship between Sufi orders and the state was distant. Orders like the Chishtis refused to accept money or support from the ruler. They believed that involvement in politics led to materialism and worldliness which they wanted to avoid. However, this attitude varied from order to order and between Sufis within an order also. Whereas the Chishtis recommended aloofness from the state, the Suhrawardis had no qualms about associating with the Sultan's court. Even the Chishtis of the Deccan accepted patronage of the state. The Naqshbandis and the Qadiris were also known for their political involvement in the Mughal period, though the representatives of the two *silsilas* displayed remarkable divergence in their approach to contemporary social and political issues.<sup>6</sup>

### Historiography

*Sources* Much of what is said above about Sufism in medieval India is derived from modern historical writings based on Sufi sources in Persian and vernacular languages. Sufi literature included (i) malfuzat (discourses of a Sufi compiled by a disciple, *murid*, generally in the lifetime of the Sufi himself), (ii) maktubat, or letters, written by a Sufi to his disciples, (iii) mystical treatises on Sufism prepared by a Sufi shaikh, (iv) compilations of Sufi poetry; (v) tazkiras, or hagiographies of Sufis, compiled generally after the death of a Sufi. Important information on Sufi activities may also be found in court-chronicles and general histories, particularly on matters relating to Sufis' relations with the rulers.

We shall refer here to some of the representative writings on the perennial debate on what were the different roles Sufis played in medieval India. Of particular interest is the question whether they were interested in conversion and Islamicization in medieval India. Sufi traditions have celebrated, from as early as the middle of the fourteenth century, the image of leading Sufi masters as Islamizers in various parts of the subcontinent. It is also claimed that the Sufi Shaikhs actually facilitated Muslim conquests and thus contributed to the expansion of Islam in India. Modern scholars have read such assertions in Sufi literature from their diverse vantage points. This has led to many contestations on how to make sense of the sources and what plausible conclusions could be arrived at.

It is suggested in one set of literature that the medieval Indian Sufis kept themselves away from politics and government of their times for they believed that involvement in politics led to materialism and worldliness. This distancing was also due to the consideration that the Sultanate was an illegal state with its resources being *haram* (prohibited) from the point of view of the *shari'at*. Thus, Sufi saints of the orders like the Chishtis not only refused to accept money or land grants from the rulers, but also declined to make a person their disciple till he had left government service, and sold all his possessions and distributed the amount amongst the poor. It is asserted that in no form contact with the state was tolerated. Further, the abhorrence to politics compelled the Sufis to stay away from the centres of political influence and establish their hospice in the localities inhabited by low caste Hindus. The spiritually hungry and depressed classes were attracted to Islamic brotherhood and egalitarianism as reflected in the activities of the hospice such as the *langar* (free kitchen). The fascinating image of the true Islam represented by the Sufis paved the way for a revolution marked by large-scale conversion of the teeming lower classes. However, it is also emphasized that the Sufis, in general, and the Chishtis, in particular, were tolerant towards non-Muslim religious traditions. They were, therefore, indifferent towards conversion. In fact, it is noted that there was no evidence of even a single case of conversion in the mystic records of the Delhi Sultanate. Such arguments, repeated at regular intervals, could be found in the numerous writings of



scholars like Carl Ernst, Mohammad Habib, Yusuf Husain, Bruce Lawrence, K.A. Nizami, and S.A.A. Rizvi, among others.<sup>7</sup>

In sharp contrast to the above assertions, a number of other scholars have observed that the Sufis, including the 'great' Chishtis of the Sultanate period, did take part in politics. Some of them visited the reigning Sultans. Others avoided visiting the Sultan's court perhaps because they considered it below their dignity to go to the court and follow its rituals. A section of them may also have felt that a tactical 'on stage' distance from the rulers was advisable for the reconciliation of a large majority of, often hostile, non-Muslim population of loosely conquered territories. Thus, the Sufis came to settle in centres of political influence or in areas already made sacred by non-Muslim religious traditions. Other strategic places they chose to stay were the much-trodden trade routes. Certainly, mainstream Sufi orders such as the influential Chishtis, Suhrawardis and Naqshbandis were against the idea of settling in forests or at lonely places. They participated in the Muslim campaigns for political conquests, which were often portrayed as fighting *jihad* or holy wars against the *kafirs* or infidels. Some also contributed to the lasting Muslim control of newly conquered territories, in the process carving out a *wilayat* or spiritual domain for themselves. In course of time Sufi warriors could as well settle down as landlords, beginning generally with the revenue-free land grants with hereditary rights (*madad-i-ma'sh* or *in'am*). Simultaneously, the emerging shrines or *dargahs* served as one of the major nodal points for interaction between Muslims and the non-Muslim population of the area. In some cases, a long process of Islamic acculturation took place around the shrines, leading eventually to the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam and formation of local Muslim communities. This process was often resisted and challenged by leaders of non-Muslim religious traditions. Sufi literature highlights the accounts of encounters, debates and dialogues between Sufis, on the one hand, and Brahmins and yogis, on the other. Further, the competing claims to authority in a given territory, where spiritual power of the Sufis matched the sway of the Sultans' armed strength, could lead to violent conflict. Mutual respect and collaboration between Sufis and rulers were however not uncommon, even as the guardians of Sunni Muslim orthodoxy, the *'ulama*, tried to use the occasional

differences to advance their own 'Islamic' agenda. These are not simply a matter of opinion, as a great deal of evidence has been deployed in support of the above propositions.<sup>8</sup> Some of the most contested themes and issues in the history of Sufism in medieval India will be discussed below in some details.

### Political and social roles of the Sufis

There are a large number of anecdotes in medieval Sufi literature about the Sufis' confrontations with their opponents: opposition, disrespect and abusive epithets used by the Sultans, 'ulama and other people of worldly influence, often led to the provocation of the *jalal* (wrath) of the Sufi shaikhs. In such situations, the Sufi's miracles reportedly served as a weapon to overawe, subdue, terrorise and occasionally even to annihilate the opponents. The curse of the shaikh often allegedly 'caused' sudden and painful death of the antagonist.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, the Sufi is said to have left the issue to be decided by God and went to the extent of leaving the place. For instance, Khwaja Mu'in-ud-Din Sijzi (d. 1236) is reported to have decided to take away his *khalifa* (spiritual successor), Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235) from Delhi to Ajmer in order to avoid a conflict with Shaikh-ul-Islam Najm-ud-Din Sughra. Bakhtiyar Kaki, however, had to stay back due to an immense public and political demand.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Khwaja Nizam-ud-Din Auliya (d. 1325) had left for Ajodhan to avoid a meeting with Sultan Jalal-ud-Din Firuz Khalji (r. 1290-96).<sup>11</sup> Later he was said to have remarked that he would leave the place if 'Ala-ud-Din Khalji (r. 1296-1316) continued to disturb him.<sup>12</sup> The Sultan's hostility came to an end only after the shaikh announced in no uncertain terms that he was not interested in matters of government and would be happy praying for the welfare of the Muslims and their king.<sup>13</sup> There are also episodes in which the adversary is forgiven altogether. For instance, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (r. 1325-51) did not face the wrath of Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Chiragh-i-Dehli (d. 1356), though the Sultan allegedly harassed the shaikh.<sup>14</sup>

As Simon Digby has shown, the source of this conflict lay in the wilayat of the shaikh, which overlapped the territorial authority of the ruler. If a major shaikh laid claims to wilayat or spiritual rule over a territory, which the king held by the force of

Conflict between  
spiritual and — 292 —  
temporal authority: turf war

Avoid court  
etiquette (Arden)

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his arms, then it was below the dignity of the shaikh to be seen under the sovereign's patronage. The shaikh, thus, refused to accept grants from the Sultan and attend his court (*darbar*), which involved the observance of court etiquette designed to emphasise the supremacy of the monarch. Alternatively, the shaikh would not permit the ruler to visit his hospice so as to avoid receiving him with the same politeness, as was the lot of the common visitors.<sup>15</sup>

The *wilayat* of the shaikh had a direct influence on the political events and material destiny of the realm. The shaikh's perceived ability to bestow kingship, his role as the protector of the people in times of crisis and as the healer of the sick made him extremely popular. Of a particular note is the Sufi's massive following among the courtiers and the soldiers.<sup>16</sup> The conspiracy against Jalal-ud-Din Khalji with Sidi Muwallih or Sayyidi Maula as its figurehead is a case in point. It was nipped in the bud with the brutal killing of the shaikh. From the point of view of the Sufis, however, the treatment meted out to the shaikh had disastrous consequences for the Khaljis. We are told a terrible wind blew on the day of the shaikh's execution and this was followed by drought and famine in Delhi and its neighbourhood.<sup>17</sup>

In the conflict over the royal and Sufic claims to authority, the official Hanafite *'ulama* sided with the ruler and questioned the violation of the *shari'at* by the shaikh in matters such as listening to music<sup>18</sup> and refusal to perform the congregational prayers.<sup>19</sup> The Sufi, in turn, looked down upon the *'ulama* and advised young employment seekers against joining the service of the king. In most contests, Sufis are shown to have emerged victorious, sometimes by establishing their superior knowledge of the *shari'at*, on other occasions by healing and levitating activities, and, on yet others by causing the death of their enemies.

Given the abundance of examples of antagonism between the Sufis and the political authority, we shall briefly refer here to only those involving Nizam-ud-Din Auliya and two Delhi Sultans – Qutb-ud-Din Mubarak-Shah Khalji (r. 1316-20) and Giyas-ud-Din Tughluq (r. 1321-25). The accounts illustrate the source of tension, weapons used by the rival parties, and the outcome of the combat. It is recorded in the earliest known extant biography of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, the *Qiwam-ul-'Aqa'id*, that Sultan Qutb-ud-Din had summoned Shaikh Rukn-ud-Din Suhrawardi from Multan.<sup>20</sup> When

Nizam-ud-Din  
Auliya

the shaikh arrived, the Sultan told him that though he came all the way from such a distant place, yet Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din who stayed outside the wall of the fort was indifferent towards him. In order to save the situation from vitiating further, Rukn-ud-Din gave an exaggerated enumeration of the Chishti shaikh's spiritual achievements and asked the ruler to refrain from making any statement against him. Embarrassed, the Sultan withdrew his words saying he bore no grudges against the shaikh and was only referring to the complaints of some persons.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere in the same text it is related that once in an inebriated state the king commanded a noble, Malik Talbugha Bughda, to remove his cap, which he had received from his *pir* (spiritual teacher), Nizam-ud-Din Auliya. When the noble refused to do so, the monarch was enraged, took out his sword and threatened to behead him if his orders were not complied with at once. The noble man replied that he could not remove the cap given by the shaikh to save his life. An astonished Sultan let him go.<sup>22</sup>

Later, referring to this tension in the relationship between the Sufi and the Sultan, Nizam-ud-Din's successor Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Dehli told his audience that once an enemy of the shaikh drew the attention of the ruler to the shaikh's refusal to accept any gift from him, though the shaikh accepted the offerings of his courtiers. The Sultan as a consequence ordered the officials to abstain from visiting the shaikh. Spies were also stationed to report if any of them violated the instruction, and also to investigate how the shaikh ran the public kitchen. When the shaikh learnt about this he asked his servants to increase the quantity of the food to be cooked and distributed. When informed about this, the king felt humiliated and remarked that he was misguided, adding that the affairs of the saint were with the *'alam-i-ghayb* (world of the unseen).<sup>23</sup>

Amir Khwurd, the author of *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, gives two reasons for Qutb-ud-Din's hostility towards Nizam-ud-Din Auliya. The Sultan had built a congregational mosque and on the first Friday, after its completion, he invited the *'ulama* and *masha'ikh* (sing. shaikh) to offer their prayer. Nizam-ud-Din refused as there was a mosque in the vicinity of his house. Secondly, it had become a custom that the holy men would visit the court on the first day of every month to greet the Sultan. Nizam-ud-Din was represented by

his servant Iqbal. Amir Khwurd notes that this afforded an opportunity for the envious to incite the sovereign and create trouble. The young monarch declared that if the shaikh did not come on the first of next month he would have him brought forcibly. The saint went to the grave of his mother, prayed and 'submitted' that the king desired to harm him. If before the end of the month his 'business was not settled', he would not come to visit her subsequently. As the day drew near, the Sufi's followers became increasingly concerned, but on the last night before the beginning of the new month, Khusrau Khan rebelled against the Sultan and treacherously cut off his head.<sup>24</sup> The issue was thus 'settled'. Nizam-ud-Din Auliya was no longer required to visit the court.

In his *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, Shaikh Jamali provides another important clue to the source of tension between the two. He notes that after the death of 'Ala-ud-Din Khalji, Qutb-ud-Din had killed the heir apparent Khizr Khan, who was a disciple of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, and captured the throne. As he saw that the entire army and most of the *amirs* (nobles) were disciples and followers of the shaikh, he doubted the latter's intentions. He therefore inquired from a close confidant, Qazi Muhammad Ghaznawi, about the shaikh's source of income. The Qazi, being an antagonist, remarked that the shaikh's expenses were met with the *nazar* (gifts) presented by the nobles. The Sultan ordered, as earlier recorded by Amir Khwurd that strict action would be taken against the officials who visited the saint and offered any gift to him. On hearing this, Nizam-ud-Din not only doubled the expenses of the hospice, but also instructed his servant to take the required coins from a cupboard in the hospice by uttering *bismillah* (that is, in the name of Allah, an expression used by devout Muslims before commencing something). As the report of the miraculous production of coins spread, the Sultan was astounded.<sup>25</sup>

The anecdotes also point towards the Suhrawardi connection in the conflict between the king and the saint. The former sought to counter-balance the power of the Chishti shaikh by summoning a Suhrawardi Sufi from Multan. Subsequently, Nizam-ud-Din had sent a messenger to Ziya-ud-Din Suhrawardi, the Sultan's spiritual master, asking him to prevent his disciple from harassing the Chishtis. The conflict over authority and

coexistence through mutual legitimacy was the hallmark of the Chishti-Suhrawardi relationship in the Delhi Sultanate. The incumbent Sufi never wanted the shaikh of a rival *silsila* to stay in his territory for long. Threatened as he was, he often gave a symbolic indication that the traveler should move on. Thus, the Suhrawardi Sufi, Baha-ud-Din Zakariya indirectly suggested to the Chishti Shaikh Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki to leave Multan and go towards Delhi by placing his shoes in that direction.<sup>26</sup> Shaikh Jamali, himself a Suhrawardi, has not mentioned this episode in his *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, but recorded that Bakhtiyar Kaki left for Delhi shortly after his miraculous protection of Multan from the onslaught of the Mongols early in the thirteenth century. When the ruler of Multan, Nasir-ud-Din Qubacha, requested the shaikh to stay for some more time, the latter replied that the place was under the protection of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya and would always be so.<sup>27</sup>

Such stories reveal an intense competition for power and prestige among Sufis of diverse traditions, and a possible conflict was avoided by recognising each other's spiritual accomplishments and areas of control. An example of such mutual legitimacy is Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar's words to a traveler who had come to seek his intercession for a safe journey southwest from Ajodhan to Multan: 'From here to such and such a reservoir is the frontier of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya, beyond which is in his charge'. It was suggested that the way-farer was able to reach his destination safely, invoking the blessings of the two saints in their respective areas of control.<sup>28</sup> The reference also demonstrates how closely the notion of spiritual geography could parallel that of political authority. As Richard Eaton has noted, it represents one of several ways in which religious and political categories of power and influence were fused together in medieval India.<sup>29</sup>

Despite attempts on the part of the Sufis to recognise the spiritual boundaries of *wilayat*, there always existed an element of tension in their relationship on account of their desire to safeguard their spheres of influence. Their differences often came to the fore with the rival parties trying to belittle each other in different ways. The indifference of the Chishti Sufis towards wealth presented a sharp contrast to the practice of the Suhrawardi saints who were known to have accumulated massive fortunes.<sup>30</sup> The controversy

over the acquisition of wealth and property dogged the relationship between the two *silsilas* early in the Sultanate period. The arguments and accusations eventually culminated in the invocation of a prophetic tradition by the Chishtis to silence their rivals. The Suhrawardis were told that their achievements as dervishes were not higher than those of Prophet Muhammad, who often stressed that his poverty was his pride.<sup>31</sup>

Several other episodes from the lives of the Chishti saints indicate that they resorted to the tradition of the Prophet to defend their spiritual practices. In this connection, we may refer to the hostility between Nizam-ud-Din Auliya and Sultan Giyas-ud-Din Tughluq. Amir Khwurd informs that the ruler had called a *mahzar*, inquest, at the instance of the shaikh's adversaries, in which the shaikh had to defend the legitimacy of his interest in music (*sama'*). Shaikhzada Husam-ud-Din, a disgruntled disciple of the saint, and the Naib Hakim Qazi Jalal-ud-Din led the accusers. The shaikh had to appear in person before a large gathering presided over by the Sultan himself. The case against him was that music was unlawful according to the ruling of Imam Abu Hanifa, the founder of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence which dominated the legal domain of the Delhi Sultanate. Arguments revolved around whether *hadis*, or tradition of the Prophet, which was not recognised by the Hanafites, could be accepted. A grandson of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya, Maulana 'Ilm-ud-Din, who had written a treatise justifying the legality of music and had traveled to various parts of the Muslim world, supported Nizam-ud-Din's position. He testified that *sama'* was practised by Sufis elsewhere without any restriction. The ruler then complied with Nizam-ud-Din's request and refused to pass any judgement. According to another report, the king pronounced *sama'* lawful for the shaikh, but not for the non-conformist mystic groups like the Qalandars.<sup>32</sup>

It is reported that after his return from the *mahzar* Nizam-ud-Din summoned disciple, courtier and writer Ziya-ud-Din Barani, together with Maulana Muhi-ud-Din Kashani and the poet Amir Khusrau. He told them that the '*ulama* were filled with envy and enmity, and regretted that the interpretations of the jurists had been preferred to the *hadis* of the Prophet. He wondered how a city where such insolence was committed could flourish. The shaikh foretold that as a result of the wickedness of the 'unsound'

faith of the 'ulama, calamity, famine and epidemic would befall on the accursed city.<sup>33</sup> Amir Khwurd concludes that it was because of this curse that within four years all the 'ulama who were in that *mahzar* were compelled to leave for Daulatabad. The city of Delhi itself witnessed a fatal famine and epidemic. Every word of the saint had come to pass.<sup>34</sup>

While recounting the proceedings of the *mahzar* from the *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, Jamali later provided the background of this conflict. He writes that after the execution of Qutb-ud-Din Mubarakshah, his usurping successor Khusrau Khan had distributed large sums to the dervishes in the city. Three shaikhs of note had refused to accept these offerings, but Nizam-ud-Din Auliya took the five lakh tankas which he had been sent and distributed the amount amongst the poor. Other shaikhs who had received the grants kept them in trust. Four months later, when Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughluq defeated Khusrau Khan and ascended the throne, he sought to recover the funds, which had left the treasury depleted. When approached, Nizam-ud-Din argued that the money he had received was from the public treasury. He had, therefore, given it to the deserving, spending nothing on himself. The Sultan was silenced by this reply, but his heart turned against the shaikh. The controversy over the legality of music came in handy for the king to call a *mahzar*. The proceedings came to an end with the ruler expressing his regret for summoning the saint to the court. No sooner had the shaikh returned to his hospice, the news arrived that the sovereign was much ashamed and had dismissed Qazi Jafal-ud-Din from his post.<sup>35</sup>

The above accounts show that unlike the case of the conflict with Qutb-ud-Din Mubarakshah, the shaikh was forced to break the Chishti principle of not visiting the court. He was compelled to appear for the inquest and submit to judgment. This had serious repercussions as the 'ulama who had opposed the saint were either dismissed or forcibly sent off to Daulatabad. Famine and epidemic haunted Delhi for decades together. The Sultan himself did not survive for long. His death at the outskirts of the capital shortly after the event and bestowal of kingship upon prince Juna Khan by Nizam-ud-Din is mentioned in the *Qiwam-ul-'Aqa'id*, but they are not linked to the above encounter.<sup>36</sup> Digby has suggested that the silence of the *Siyar-ul-Auliya* in this connection



may have been due to political reasons, as the work was mostly written in the reign of a sovereign of the dynasty, Firuzshah Tughluq, who honoured the memory of his kinsmen and predecessors.<sup>37</sup> However, this explanation is not applicable to the *Qiwam-ul-'Aqa'id*, which was written in the Bahamanid kingdom in 1354.

Further, there are numerous anecdotes in the literature of the Delhi Sultanate concerning the bestowal of kingship by the Sufi saints upon a person of their choice. The court chronicles corroborate these accounts. Such a notion was more likely to flourish in a society where there was no strong tradition of primogeniture or hereditary rule and usurpation of power was common.<sup>38</sup> Such was the case in the Delhi Sultanate. According to an anecdote recorded by Minhaj-us-Siraj in his *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, as a young slave in Bukhara, the future Sultan Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish was sent to purchase some grapes. He lost the money on the way and started crying out of fear. Observing the child's predicament, a dervish bought some grapes for him and asked him to pledge that when he succeeded to the dominion, he would show respect to the holy men. Minhaj-us-Siraj quoted the Sultan as saying that he swore as told, and the good fortune and the sovereign power that he had attained was due to the grace of that dervish.<sup>39</sup> Later, Nizam-ud-Din Auliya told his audience that Iltutmish had met Shahab-ud-Din Suhrawardi and Auhad-ud-Din Kirmani, and one of them had prophesied that he would become a king.<sup>40</sup>

*miracles*  
*in* The rulers' invocation of the belief that they owed their power to the Sufis' blessings indicated their quest for legitimacy. This was essential in view of the threat from all around and provides a solution to the contending demands of religion and politics in the period. On the other hand, the stories of conflict and collaboration (acting as king makers, offering prayers for the welfare of Muslims and their ruler, etc.) testify to the Sufis' interests in political matters. This political role of the Sufis, mainly the Chishtis, has been denied in a dominant historiographical tradition, as observed earlier. Some recent studies, however, demonstrate a more empirically sustainable approach to the problem. The stories of miracles further confirm the Sufis' involvement in matters of political interest. As noted above, the

Sufi shaikh's *wilayat* was the bone of contention between him and the ruler. His perceived ability to grant kingship to a person of his choice and snatch it from someone who refused to recognise his authority, and his large following among the courtiers and the soldiers was a cause of concern for the sovereign. In the resultant conflict, the monarch utilised the support of the '*ulama* and that of the Sufis of a rival *silsila*. Among the weapons that the shaikh used was his miraculous power to eliminate the adversary. We noticed in the case of the differences between Nizam-ud-Din Auliya and the Delhi Sultans as to how the antagonists were removed one by one. The saint's *jadal* affected even the populace, as his curse is believed to have caused famine and epidemic in the city.

*Barkat* If the Sufis' curse caused destruction, their blessings (*barkat*) were supposed to protect the people in times of crisis. Their role as the saviour is very well illustrated in the accounts of the Mongol attacks, which shook the Muslim world for over a hundred years, beginning in the first decade of the thirteenth century.<sup>41</sup> The belief that an accomplished Sufi had the ability to influence the destiny of his territory was given further impetus through claims in Sufi circles that the towns and cities would be destroyed if the *barkat* of the dervishes were terminated.<sup>42</sup> In fact, according to Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, a certain Khwaja Karim used to boast that no infidel could capture Delhi so long as his grave existed there.<sup>43</sup>

The Sufis were also approached for protection from certain malevolent supernatural beings such as the *pari*.<sup>44</sup> Many references show that they recommended certain verses of the Qur'an as an antidote against their visitations.<sup>45</sup> Visits to the tombs of the Sufis, their relics, amulets (*t'awiz*) distributed by them, 'breathing' and 'touching' were considered to be effective healing means.<sup>46</sup> Implicit in the healing practices of the Sufis was perhaps the belief that one or the other kind of *jinn* or demon was behind the sickness of a person. The Sufis, owing to their spiritual knowledge and power, were capable of containing or even destroying the *jinn*s. They were, thus, able to provide relief to the afflicted.<sup>47</sup> Apart from curing the sick, cases of revival of the dead at the hands of the Sufis are also reported. In one such anecdote, the performance of this miracle by Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki led to the conversion of

thousands of non-Muslims to Islam.<sup>48</sup> We shall return to the question of conversion of non-Muslim in the next section.

Stories such as these created an aura around the personality of the Sufis. The defeat of the hostile 'ulama and their acceptance of the Sufi shaikh's paranormal power added to the latter's popularity and authoritative position in the society.<sup>49</sup> Nizam-ud-Din Auliya detested Sufis who sought to gain popularity by show-casing their miraculous powers. He felt that it was obligatory for the *auliya* (friends of God) to downplay their *karamat*, even as it was binding upon the *anbiya* (prophets) to display their *mu'ajizat* (miracles).<sup>50</sup>

Thus, not all saints were so arrogant. In fact, it was humility – together with the performance of marvelous feats – that made the people venerate the Sufis. The relationship between the Sufis and their followers were seen in terms of mutual fidelity and aid. The people revered a shaikh and, in turn, were blessed with his patronage and protection. Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar is said to have left for Hansi as the people of the place were prevented from having an easy access to the shaikh in the capital city.<sup>51</sup> Later, he was reportedly rebuked by a follower for trying to keep aloof from the people at Ajodhan.<sup>52</sup> Nizam-ud-Din Auliya informed his audience that he was advised by a visitor to his *jama'at-khana*, probably a member of the *mardan-i-ghayb*, people who purportedly inhabited an invisible world, to stay at Ghiyaspur in Delhi when the shaikh was contemplating to move to a lonely place.<sup>53</sup> When Chiragh-i-Dehli expressed his desire to leave the city and settle at some small and desolate place, his *pir* commanded him to remain and work among the people.<sup>54</sup> The departure of a Sufi from a particular area was considered to be a bad omen. Nizam-ud-Din, for instance, believed that the region of Punjab was secured from the Mongol onslaught because of the blessings of Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar. In the year when the shaikh departed from this world, the Mongols invaded and devastated the region.<sup>55</sup>

The Sufi shaikh's authoritative position in society was contested not only by Sultans and 'ulama, wandering Muslim mystics like the Qalandars and non-Muslim yogis also often challenged the basis of the shaikh's power and prestige. The Qalandars, visiting the *jama'atkhana*, often created problems and resorted to violence. In fact, several reports of murderous assaults

either planned or actually carried out by the Qalandars on the Sufi shaikhs are to be found in the sources.<sup>56</sup> In most cases the shaikh is shown to have discovered the assailant through *kashf* or mystical revelation before he had attacked. In two cases involving Sidi Muwallih and Chiragh-i-Dehli, the Qalandars were given enough time and opportunity to actually assail the shaikh, yet they were forgiven.<sup>57</sup> The episodes also reveal that the psychologically disturbed wandering mystics were occasionally hired by the political opponents of the Sufi concerned to eliminate him.<sup>58</sup> By contrast, the visiting yogis/Brahmins/sanyasis/gurus of the Hindus tended to be less aggressive, though stories of miraculous encounters between Sufis and non-Muslim mystics abound in the sources.

*Context to Sufi's authority* The detailed discussion above clearly points to the contestations over the authoritative position of the Sufi shaikh in medieval Indian society and politics. An important source of the Sufi's authority was his perceived ability to perform incredible feats. Many of these tales were narrated by no less an authority than the leading Chishti shaikh of Delhi, Nizam-ud-Din Auliya. Subsequent narrators such as Chiragh-i-Dehli, Shaikh Jamali and Abdul Haqq Muhaddis related the episodes of miracles with added details. For all of them, miracle was an integral part of the Sufi discipline. Thus, the modern notion that miracle stories were later concoctions by the shrewd keepers of shrines who sought to exploit the credulity of ignorant followers is not supported by the sources. It was believed in medieval Sufi circles that sustained provocation from any antagonist or the miserable condition of a devotee could legitimately induce an accomplished Sufi shaikh to perform miracles, either wrathful or showing benevolence.

The legitimacy for the Sufis' claim of wielding miraculous power came from the 'grand' tradition of Islam, mainly the life and teachings of the Prophet; the Sufis claimed that they were merely emulating the Messenger of God. The followers of the Sufis considered themselves belonging to the community of the Prophet (*ahl-i-sunnat wal jama'at*), and hoped to be successful both 'here' (in this world) and the 'hereafter' (in the next). By contrast, the accursed opponents of the shaikhs were not merely subdued, but also said to be dispatched to hell. The public had the option of either submitting to the authority of the Sufis and be 'rewarded' for

it, or refusing to acknowledge the latter's charisma and sainthood, which could lead to calamity and destruction in society. Many indeed chose to recognise the authority of the Sufis, as is evident from the widespread respect they commanded in different regions throughout medieval India and in later times.

For a historian like K.A. Nizami, who was committed to the pluralist tradition of medieval Indian scholarship, it was the broad and cosmopolitan outlook of the Sufis, marked by their belief in the unity of God and service to humanity, that brought about a social and cultural revolution of far-reaching consequences, removing mistrust and isolation and facilitating social and ideological rapprochements between communities.<sup>59</sup> In a more communally-conscious appreciation of Sufi activities in Indian Hindu environment, Aziz Ahmad has noted that the various Sufi orders began with hostility, passed through a phase of co-existence and culminated in tolerance. Yet, as the Sufis penetrated into the Hindu society and began to attract converts to Islam, the Bhakti movements rose as a popular Hindu counter-challenge to the proselytizing attraction of Sufi humanism.<sup>60</sup>

### Conversion and Islamicization

As indicated above, the missionary and proselytizing activities of the Sufis and their shrines have been noted in some modern writings. These include Islamization through large-scale immigration of foreign Muslims, conversion through sword or political patronage and social liberation of lower caste Hindus, who were attracted toward egalitarian Islam, represented by the Sufis.<sup>61</sup> Within Sufi determinism also, there is no single opinion. Some historians have explained the attitude towards conversion in terms of the general outlook of the particular *silsila* to which the Sufis belonged. Thus, the Chishtis are considered tolerant and accommodative and, therefore, disinterested in formal conversion. The same group of scholars considered the Suhrawardis as orthodox and uncompromising and, therefore, keen to convert even if it meant use of force.<sup>62</sup> Some other scholars have sought to trace the difference to ideological positions maintained by particular shaikhs. It is argued that those who believed in *wahdat-ul-wujud* were open-minded towards the Hindus, caring little or not at all about their conversion, while those who followed

*conversion not primary for Sufis*

wahdat-us-shuhud tended to be hostile to them and favoured forced conversion.<sup>63</sup> Yet others think of conversion in terms of the long process of Islamic acculturation. In an important contribution to this latter set of writings, Richard Eaton emphasises on slow and gradual process of Islamic acculturation, not marked by any great historical moment of sudden 'conversion' by Sufi 'missionaries'. In fact, Eaton notes that both the terms used above, 'conversion' and 'missionaries', are uncritically derived from the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Christian movement in India and cannot be used for Sufi activities in medieval India, certainly not for Bijapur in Deccan.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, denying that conversion of non-Muslims was one of the primary objectives of Sufi activities in medieval Indian environment, Carl Ernst notes that 'Sufi as missionary' image was erroneously constructed and disseminated by three later sources: royal historiography, tribal and caste traditions incorporated in later hagiographies and British gazetteers, and nineteenth-century British concepts of Christian missions. There is a mismatch between the image of the Sufis in later writings and the 'the picture of Sufi discipline and practice as found in the early Sufi manuals', especially those relating to the Chishti fraternity of Khuldabad in the Deccan.<sup>65</sup>

*official Sufis desired forced conversion*

There is a general belief in a dominant historiographical tradition, represented by scholars like Muhammad Habib and K.A. Nizami, that early mystic records did not refer to a single case of conversion. Working with a similar framework, S.A.A. Rizvi does offer, in an article, a detailed political background as the possible context for proselytizing activities, but he eventually adopts a denial mode on whether the Sufis' did or did not convert non-Muslims to Islam. For Rizvi, the main instruments of proselytization were qazis and mullas, religious officials in the service of the government. As is generally the case with the pluralist writings on medieval India, Rizvi notes that Akbar's liberal policies put an end to the political and economic incentives which had previously led Hindus to embrace Islam. It was a matter of satisfaction for Rizvi that the emperor himself moved away from Islam and 'totally stopped conversion' by force.<sup>66</sup>

Contrary to what some historians like to portray, the medieval Sufi texts do present the Sufis as the main agent for proselytization and propagation of Islam. The texts actually

celebrate the image of the Sufis as the chief propagators of Islam in medieval India. Caste oppression and the drawing capability that egalitarian Islam might have, or, for that matter, economic and political dimensions, are not mentioned in the literature as factors for conversion. The one recurrent motive for conversion of individuals and, at times, of the entire locality or town is the attraction to the miracle working shaikh. Most cases of mass conversion are shown to be the outcome of oppositional encounters of the visiting shaikh with the local holy man, generally a yogi, in full view of the public, in which the former emerges victorious and establishes his authority. The accounts of conversion are generally the sequel to the outcome of the contests; or the shaikh's thaumaturgic role such as his revival of the dead and protection from malevolent supernatural beings.

We may mention here the story of the miraculous encounter of Mu'in-ud-Din Sijzi's *pir*, 'Usman Harwani,<sup>67</sup> after his arrival at a village of fire-worshippers (*atish prastan*), and point to the growth of some interesting legends related to it. Chiragh-i-Dehli's account in *Khair-ul-Majalis* reported that the shaikh addressed the inhabitants and suggested that since they were worshipping the fire for long, it should not burn anyone who jumped into it. The people were frightened and no one volunteered to do so. The shaikh then asked whether they would convert to Islam if he entered the fire-chamber, sat there for some time and came out unscathed. When they agreed to the proposal, the shaikh immediately took a Hindu child (*hindu bachcha*) in his arms and plunged into the fire. The Hindus and the fire worshippers who were gathered there recited the *kalima* (profession of faith in Allah's unity and Muhammad's prophethood) and embraced Islam when the shaikh achieved the feat. The shaikh, then, came out of the fire-chamber with the child in tow. When asked how he felt inside, the child reportedly announced in Hindawi language that it seemed as if he was sitting in a garden.<sup>68</sup> It might be relevant to point out here that this anecdote appears in an 'authentic' *malfuzat* collection, though such classification of Sufi literature as 'authentic' and 'spurious' need a reconsideration.

The anecdotes of conversion in Sufi literature, both of individuals and in groups, reveal attempts at establishing the

authority of the Sufi shaikhs. Contrary to the perception of some modern scholars, the anecdotes indicate the keenness of the Chishti shaikhs for conversion. Reports of conversion of non-Muslims as a result of a public display of miracles further confirmed the Sufi's spiritual superiority and augmented his claim to power and authority. An extensive field work by the Suhrawardi shaikh, Jamali Kamboh, has confirmed that the anecdotes in Sufi literature were considered as valid in the late fifteenth century public discourse.<sup>69</sup> Some later works further confirm Jamali's reports.<sup>70</sup> We may conclude that the accounts of conversion in our texts have, historically, been considered as valid in both the Chishti and non-Chishti Sufi circles and in the larger sphere of their followers, even though these claims cannot be verified in modern rational, empirical terms as 'hard' historical facts.

Further, the anecdote of the execution of a Hindu *darogha* of Uchch after his refusal to convert at the hands of the Suhrawardi shaikhs, Makhdum Jahaniyan and his brother Raju Qattal exhibits their zeal for conversion as well as the extent to which they wielded their power in the late fourteenth-century Delhi Sultanate. It is recorded by Jamali that Firuz Shah Tughluq (r. 1351-88) had appointed a Hindu called Nauahun as the *darogha* of Uchch. Once when Makhdum Jahaniyan was ill, Nauahun paid a courtesy call on the shaikh. Praying for the shaikh's recovery, he remarked that the person of the Makhdum was the last of the saints just as Muhammad was the last of the prophets. The shaikh felt that from the point of view of the *shari'at*, the Hindu was deemed to have become a Muslim after having said these words. This statement of the *darogha* was heard by Raju Qattal, the shaikh's brother, and also a couple of Muslims who were present there. Fearing forcible conversion to Islam, the *darogha* fled from Uchch and proceeded toward the capital city of Delhi. Reaching the Sultan's court, he apprised him of the matter. The Sultan, who considered him as a friend, asked him whether he would convert to Islam if it were established that he had made such a statement. Nauahun expressed his unwillingness to convert under any circumstances. Soon Makhdum Jahaniyan breathed his last. Three days later Raju Qattal left for Delhi along with the eye-witnesses. They ensured that Nauahun was killed on the charge of apostasy (*irtadad*).<sup>71</sup>



The above anecdote does illustrate the helplessness of the Sultan before the Sufi's power. Condemning the Suhrawardi shaikhs as orthodox and uncompromising, some modern scholars have cited this anecdote as an evidence of their 'intolerance' towards non-Muslims. The same scholars suggest that the Chishti shaikhs, in contrast, were tolerant and accommodative and, therefore, disinterested in formal conversion.<sup>72</sup> In reaching such a conclusion, however, they ignore the evidence to the effect that the Suhrawardis were subsumed at this stage in the more hegemonic Chishti *silsila* with the leading shaikh, Makhdum Jahaniyan, himself becoming a *khalifa* of Chiragh-i-Delhi.<sup>73</sup> Also neglected are the episodes in which the noted Chishti shaikhs themselves are found to be compelling non-Muslim antagonists to convert. Take, for instance, the tale in which the Chishti shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar is shown to have discovered some *kafirs* (infidels) masquerading as *faqirs* (dervishes), locked their leader for several days before forcing them to convert to Islam. The anecdote is recorded in the *Ahsan-ul-Aqwal*, a collection of the *malfuzat* of Burhan-ud-Din Gharib (d.1337), who was a prominent *khalifa* of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya.<sup>74</sup>

Also, *Lata'if-i-Ashrafi*, the collection of the *malfuzat* of Saiyid Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, gives a detailed account of the shaikh's encounter with a yogi who had refused to surrender either his person or the territory under his domination. The shaikh was compelled to send a disciple, Jamal-ud-Din, to engage him in a miraculous combat. Jamal-ud-Din went to the yogi and told him that though it was unbecoming to display miracles, yet he would give fitting rejoinder to each of the powers displayed. The first trick of the yogi was to make heaps of black ants advance from every direction towards Jamal-ud-Din, but when the latter looked resolutely at them they vanished. After this an army of tigers appeared. 'What harm a tiger can do to me', quipped Jamal-ud-Din. And they all fled. After such exhibition of skills the yogi threw his stick into the air. Jamal-ud-Din asked for the staff of the shaikh (Ashraf Jahangir Simnani) and sent it up after the stick. The shaikh's staff kept striking the yogi's stick till the latter was pinned down. Having exhausted all his devices the yogi said, '.... Take me to the shaikh, I will become a believer!' Jamal-ud-Din then took him to the shaikh and asked him to prostrate before the latter. The

shaikh then instructed him to recite the *kalima*. Simultaneously, all the five hundred disciples of the yogi became Muslims, and made a bonfire of their scriptures.<sup>75</sup> This anecdote further confirms the zeal of the Chishti shaikhs for conversion, a marked deviation from the usual depiction of their impartial position or indifference in the matter. Here, as elsewhere, the superior miraculous power of the shaikh was held responsible for conversion of non-Muslims. In fact, in the last encounter the shaikh felt that it was below his dignity to engage the yogi in a personal confrontation, and deputed instead a disciple of his for the purpose.

We shall continue our discussion here of the Chishti Sufis' proclivity towards conversion in the light of the attitude of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, and that of Khwaja Bandah-Nawaz Gesu-Daraz who later migrated to the Deccan. It is recorded in *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad* that a disciple arrived in the middle of a discussion in the *jama'at-khana* of Nizam-ud-Din, along with a Hindu whom he addressed as his brother. When both were seated, the shaikh asked the disciple whether the said brother of his had any inclination towards Islam. The disciple replied that it was precisely for that very purpose that he had brought him to his feet so that by the blessing of his glance he might become a Muslim. With tears in his eyes the shaikh remarked. '....No matter what you say you cannot change the heart of these people'. Yet it is hoped that through the grace of the company of a devout Muslim he might become one, the shaikh added. After this he narrated the story of the conversion of the king of Iraq who was entrusted by the second caliph 'Umar to the company of a pious Muslim. The dethroned king had earlier refused to embrace Islam even under the threat of execution, but the company of the virtuous Muslim made such an impact on him that he eventually returned to 'Umar and professed his faith in Islam. Finally, the shaikh commented on the lack of moral integrity (*sadaq wa dayanat*) amongst Muslims through the story of a Jew who stayed in the neighbourhood of Bayazid Bistami. When Bayazid passed away, the mournful Jew was asked why he did not become a Muslim at the hands of the shaikh. The Jew retorted as to what kind of Muslim they wanted him to become, adding that if Islam was what Bayazid practiced he would not be able to attain it and if it were the way Muslims lived he was ashamed of it.<sup>76</sup> Nizam-ud-Din Auliya's observation, if read together with his

narration of the tales of conversion, clearly shows that he was not disinterested in proselytization. Nizam-ud-Din did not approve of the use of force, nor did he recognize the importance of persuasion for 'the change of heart' of non-Muslims. He believed that conversion was possible through the gradual transformation of heart of non-Muslims if put in the company of a pious person, for example, a Sufi shaikh, or through a cataclysmic change of heart made possible by Sufi shaikh's miraculous power. Nizam-ud-Din also emphasized reform within as the best means for the propagation of the faith.

A different perspective emerges from the anguishes of Khwaja Gesu-Daraz over the refusal of the Hindus to convert to Islam. Gesu-Daraz complains that many times learned men had come to him, challenging and disputing. He told them that he had read their Sanskrit texts and knew their mythology. They accepted without any reservation what he had to tell them about their belief. Then he expounded his own faith, based on logical reasoning and left it to the antagonists to judge. They were astonished by Gesu-Daraz's reasoning, wept and prostrated before him as they did when worshipping their idols. He remarked that all this was of no use for the agreement was that the beliefs of the party which appeared to be in the right should be adopted by the other. One replied that he had a wife and child and a household to support, and another observed that what was he to do for his elders had followed this belief; what was good for them was also good for the present.<sup>77</sup> Mention may be made here of Gesu-Daraz's encounter with Saddiya, a guru of the Hindus. The guru was defeated by the shaikh in a levitating contest – involving the transformation of the combatants into a hawk (the shaikh) and a dove (the guru) – and acknowledged his authority, but did not convert to Islam.<sup>78</sup> It may be noted that unlike Nizam-ud-Din, Gesu Daraz preferred engaging in debate and competitions of miracles with the Hindu yogis and Brahmans and adopted a resentful attitude if they refused to embrace Islam. Also, while Nizam-ud-Din preferred change of companionship, Gesu-Daraz was for argument based on reasoning, intellectual discussion and disputations.

A more aggressive approach may be found in the activities and writings of the Naqshbandi Sufi Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi in the

late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, though Yohanan Friedmann has noted that Sarhindi's attitude towards Hindus was context specific. Also, Sirhindi was not particularly interested in conversion, instead, for him; the honour of Islam demanded the humiliation of the Hindus. The latter should be treated as dogs, and cows slaughtered to demonstrate the supremacy of Islam. In general, Sirhindi's main concern was the reform and empowerment of Muslims.<sup>79</sup> By contrast, another leading Naqshbandi Sufi, Shah Waliullah, adopted a more eclectic approach even on questions of saint-worship and Sufi practice of music in the eighteenth century. As J.M.S. Baljon has shown, Waliullah offered a qualified approval of existing Sufi practices, which was marked by an evolution of his ideas and resultant modifications in his approach.<sup>80</sup>

Further, modern scholarship complains about the paucity of information on the activities of Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti in the literature of the Delhi Sultanate and suggests that the popular devotion to the shaikh and the legends associated with him emerged only after the decay and decline of the Sultanate. On the contrary, at least three *malfuzat* collections, the *Anis-ul-Arwah*, *Dalil-ul-Arifin*, and the *Fawa'id-us-Salikin*, which were in circulation in mid-fourteenth-century Delhi Sultanate, primarily focus on the life and activities of Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti. Besides, *Asrar-u-Auliya*, the collection of the *malfuzat* of Farid-ud-Din Ganji-Shakar, also contained several anecdotes related to the shaikh. Amir Khwurd has used the material in these *malfuzat* collections for writing biographical accounts of the shaikh and his important disciples. Writing in the early sixteenth century, Jamali has further elaborated the accounts in the light of his own on-the-spot study of Sufi centres and the popular construct of their history.

The growth of legends involving Mu'in-ud-Din's arrival at Ajmer, and his encounter with the local ruler may be briefly summarized here. Mu'in-ud-Din was reportedly directed by the Prophet in a dream in Medina to go to Hindustan. The Khwaja's arrival coincided with the Turkish conquest. Sufi tradition claims that Mu'in-ud-Din had prophesied Ghurid victory in the second battle of Tarain. The Chauhan ruler Rai Pithaura (Prithviraj Chauhan) was allegedly harassing the shaikh and his disciples at Ajmer. Later traditions also claim that the Sufi shaikh had to

display his miraculous power to subdue the Chauhan ruler. Amir Khwurd wrote in mid-fourteenth century that when Mu'in-ud-Din reached Ajmer, Rai Pithaura was ruling from there. The ruler and his officials resented the shaikh's presence in the area, but the latter's eminence and power to perform miracles prompted them to hold their hand. A disciple of the shaikh, who was in the service of the Rajput king, began to receive hostile treatment from the ruler. The shaikh sent a message in his behalf. Pithaura refused to accept Mu'in-ud-Din's recommendation and resented the reports of the shaikh's alleged claims to understand the secrets of the Unseen. When the Sufi master, '*badshah-i-islam*', says the biographer, heard this, he commented: Pithaura has been captured alive and handed over to the army of Islam. About the same time, Mu'iz-ud-Din's army arrived from Ghazni and defeated the Rajputs.<sup>81</sup>

*dar ul Islam*  
Amir Khwurd also highlighted the personality of Mu'in-ud-Din as a preacher and Islamizer with considerable charismatic power. He wrote that infidelity and idol worship were widespread in Hindustan before the arrival of the shaikh. The people worshipped stones, trees, animals and even cow-dung. Their hearts were sealed in the darkness of infidelity. The author claimed that with the coming of the saint the dark clouds of ignorance gave way to the spiritual light of Islam. Addressing the Sufi master as the true *mu'in* or helper of the faith, the Chishti biographer claimed that the credit for conversion of the people of Hindustan goes to the shaikh and to those whose further preaching transformed this enemy land, *dar-ul-harb*, into the abode of Islam, *dar-ul-Islam*.<sup>82</sup>

Theoretically, *dar-ul-Islam* is the territory where *shari'at* prevails as the supreme law of the land, guaranteeing a privileged position to the members of the community of Islam, *umma*. Others like the *zimmis*, People of the Book, could stay in the dominion with assurance of protection of their lives and some amount of freedom to practice their religions. In the Indian case, the position of the Hindus in the Sultanate remained ambivalent even as the polity was far from a *shari'at*-driven Islamic state. Occasional rhetoric notwithstanding, no concerted effort for a complete political and religious transformation was undertaken. Sufis were also satisfied with the respect and spiritual authority that they enjoyed in the dominion. The veneration showed by the people,

no effort  
to engage in political  
or religious  
transformation

even if they did not formally convert to Islam, was gratifying enough.

Mu'in-ud-Din's popularity amongst non-Muslims may be mentioned here. The fact that non-Muslims visited the shaikh's tomb every year and offered large sums to the keepers of the shrine is much extolled by Sufi biographers. In early Muslim perception, however, the shaikh was the harbinger of the faith in the region of Ajmer. This image of the shaikh is also reflected in non-Sufi literature of the period. Referring to the visit of Mu'in-ud-Din's tomb by Sultan Muhammad Tughluq in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, chronicler Isami, in his *Futuh-us-Salatin*, called the shaikh the refuge of the faith.<sup>83</sup> Evidently, the Sufi's charisma, both as living master and as he lay in his grave, won him a large following, and his *khalifas* spread in different directions. One of them, Hamid-ud-Din went to live in a village near Nagaur, where he cultivated a small plot of land, became a vegetarian, and seemingly led a life conforming to the Hindu environment. Mu'in-ud-Din chose a more sophisticated Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki for the cosmopolitan *wilayat* of Delhi. As noted above, Delhi was further nurtured by two other leading Chishtis in the subsequent generations, Nizam-ud-Din Auliya and his spiritual successor, Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh. While the latter followed his preceptor's instruction to stay in Delhi and 'serve' the people, a number of other fellow Chishtis established the order in various parts of the subcontinent, including Bengal and the Deccan.<sup>84</sup>

Simon Digby has noted that the rise to pre-eminence of the Chishti Shaikhs in India from a relatively obscure lineage in Chisht, now in Afghanistan – with their legends, tombs and shrines enjoying excessive influence – may not necessarily be due to the abundance and variety of qualities attributed to the Chishtis and nor due to any great number of devotees in their lifetime. Such an image and following was built over time, the initial impetus for which came from the ascendancy of the Chishti tradition at a time when they could attract the best of the Sultanate intellectuals and propagandists like Amir Khusrau, Amir Hasan and Ziya-ud-Din Barni, who celebrated the charisma of the Chishtis in their writings. Their early testimonies served as models for building and celebrating the singular importance of the Chishti tradition in posterity.<sup>85</sup> However, as other set of historians have shown, the

social and cultural roles of Sufis and their institutions cannot be dismissed as a mere propaganda; many Sufis were venerated as living legends and enjoyed widespread following in their lifetime.

### Concluding Remarks

Notwithstanding the contestations, whether theological or historiographical, Sufi traditions continue to practice and preach in the language of love and peace at a time when most forms of Islam are identified or confused with violence or terrorism. Tolerant, accommodative and popular branches of Sufism, like that of the Chishtis, originating in a region which is now infamous for violence, Afghanistan, have shown that it was possible to lead a good Muslim life even as one can reach out to a larger humanity and attract them to their fold without using force or political power. The Sufis, both living masters and later inheritors as well as keepers of the shrines, dargahs, and their practice of Islam (love for God, often like a Majnun would do for Layla, respect for the traditions of Prophet Muhammad and aspiration to follow his path, and service to humanity and not of Muslims alone) command a lot of respect. Sufi shrines are flourishing in contexts in which mosques can be destroyed at will, state-machinery permitting.

Sufism remains a vibrant movement, attracting devotees from across various strata of society - urban poor, thugs, criminals, politicians, ministers - can be seen offering ritual Sufic chadars and prostrating in the dargahs of Sufi-saints, many of whom lived several centuries earlier. The ability of the Sufis to speak in the language of the masses, Indic vernaculars (Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, etc.), and the perceived paranormal powers have attracted people, some for following the ways of the Sufis, but mostly for blessings and benedictions.

Qawwali and other song and dance techniques are central to most forms of devotional religion, as is for the Sufis of various *silsilas*. As we saw above, in his lifetime, Nizam-ud-Din Auliya himself fought a bitter struggle with the *‘ulama* or theologians backed by the Delhi Sultans in the fourteenth century, contesting the legitimacy of his practice of organising musical sessions. For the theologians, professing Hanafite interpretation of mainstream Sunni Islam, music is *haram*, or a forbidden act. On the other

hand, for most Sufi practitioners, it is one of the most effective and perfectly valid ways to remember Allah and achieve ecstasy.

Sufism has been under attack from reformist Islam of various hues, such as the puritanical Tablighi Jama'at and the political Jama'at-i-Islami. Sufi practices like listening to music, adaptations from Hindu mystical traditions, and any other innovations are condemned and the Sufis' claims that it was because of them that Islam could spread in the subcontinent so rapidly is mocked at by remarks such as 'the quality of Islam that they practiced and preached was bad'. In addition, though extremist or militant forms of political Islam generally draw on the Wahabi kind of reformism or Islamism, Muslims adhering to devotional Islam or Sufism are not innocent to international politics involving Muslims. In hostile political contexts, the Sufi-oriented Islam can be as aggressive as any other group, even as culturally it is not averse to appropriating from diverse mystical traditions and adapting to the demands of time and space.

Bound to their own commitments to the different strands of contemporary social and political ideologies, scholars have not been able to do justice to the historical roles of Sufis in medieval India and their legacy in modern times. Thus, examples of Sufi rapprochement and accommodation in Hindu environment are invoked for the purpose of communal harmony and secularism, ignoring the complexities of Sufi experiences and activities; puritans mock at the compromises Sufi groups have made in their practice of Islam in the diverse social contexts of the Indian Subcontinent; and the credulous have been desperately holding on to the stories of miracles associated with the graves and tombs of the Sufis in their uncritical appreciation of what the Sufis must have been like. What is missing in much of these is a close scrutiny of all available data and its verifiability by historians who do not need to toe the demands of contemporary politics and whose assumptions are not privileged over conclusions arrived at through a dispassionate or objective study of the relevant literature. Put bluntly, Sufis should not be compelled to turn in their graves by scribing roles which they might not have played.



## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> For the most comprehensive and up-to-date synthesis of the early phase of Sufism, see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, The New Edinburgh Islamic Survey Series (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.62.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.175.
- <sup>5</sup> For a fourteenth-century reference to the Sufi practice of *chilla-i-makus*, see Amir Khwurd, *Siyar-ul-Auliya* (Islamabad: Markaz Tahqiqat-i-Farsi Iran wa Pakistan, 1978).
- <sup>6</sup> For a fuller discussion of these issues, also see, Raziuddin Aquil, *In the Name of Allah: Understanding Islam and Indian History* (New Delhi: Penguin-Viking, 2009), chapters one and seven.
- <sup>7</sup> See, for instance, K.A. Nizami, (ed.), *Politics and Society During the Early Medieval Period, Collected Works of Muhammad Habib*, 2 Vols. (New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1974); Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture* (Bombay: Asia, 1957); S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India, Vol. I, Early Sufism and its History in India to 1600 A.D.* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978); K.A. Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002). Also see, Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, with an Introduction by Marc Gaborieau, reprint (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- <sup>8</sup> For relevant references, see Raziuddin Aquil, 'Sufi Cults, Politics and Conversion: The Chishtis of the Sultanate Period', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 22, Nos. 1-2, 1995-96, pp.190-7.
- <sup>9</sup> *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, pp. 94-95; Shaikh Jamali, *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, British Museum Ms. Or. 5853, OIOC, British Library, London, fol. 45b; Ali Asghar, *Jawahir-i-Faridi* (Lahore: Victoria Press, 1884), p. 220.
- <sup>10</sup> *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, pp. 64-5.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-5; Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dehlawi, *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar fi Asrar-ul-Abrar* (Deoband: Kutubkhana Rahimiyya, n.d.), p. 64.
- <sup>13</sup> *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, pp. 63-4. For other accounts of 'Ala-ud-Din Khalji's hostility towards the shaikh, his subsequent faith in the miraculous ability of the latter and acceptance of the princes, Khizr Khan and Shadi Khan, in the *jama'atkhana* as disciples of the shaikh, see Muhammad Jamal Qiwan, *Qiwam-ul-Aqa'id*, Urdu trans. Nisar

- Ahmad Faruqi (Rampur, 1994), pp. 91-6. Also see Ziya-ud-Din Barni, *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, British Museum Ms. Or. 6376, OIOC, British Library, London, fols. 153a-b.
- <sup>14</sup> *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, pp. 255-6; *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, p. 87.
- <sup>15</sup> For a study of the 'authority' connotation of the shaikh's *wilayat*, leading to conflict with the rulers and the victory of the shaikh as recorded in the sources of the Delhi Sultanate, see Simon Digby, 'The Sufi Shaikh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India', *Iran – Journal of Persian Studies*, 28, 1990, pp. 71-4.
- <sup>16</sup> Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Persian text with Urdu translation by Khwaja Hasan Sani Nizami (Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1991), Vol. IV, 21<sup>st</sup> meeting; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p.89; *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 158b-160a.
- <sup>17</sup> *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 96b-99a. Also see, *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, p. 79. Among modern secondary works, see Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India*; Simon Digby, 'Qalandars and Related Groups: Elements of Social Deviance in the Religious Life of the Delhi Sultanate of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in Y. Friedman (ed.), *Islam in Asia, Vol. I, South Asia* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 67-8.
- <sup>18</sup> Of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence, the Hanafites have been dominant in North Indian Islam. The Hanafite 'ulama of the Delhi Sultanate considered music assemblies organised by the shaikh as illegal. The controversy surrounding Nizam-ud-Din's justification of *sama'* is discussed below. Also see, Bruce B. Lawrence, 'The Early Chishti Approach to Sama', in M. Israel and N.K. Wagle (eds.), *Islamic Society and Culture – Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp. 69-93.
- <sup>19</sup> See, for example, the theologians' reaction to Shaikh Luqman Sarakhsi and his miraculous escape by riding a wall, *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. I, 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- <sup>20</sup> For Sultan Qutb-ud-Din's invitation to Rukn-ud-Din, also see *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fol. 183a.
- <sup>21</sup> *Qiwam-ul-'Aqa'id*, p. 52.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.
- <sup>23</sup> *Khair-ul-Majalis*, collection of the discourses of Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Dehli compiled by Hamid Qalandar, (ed.), Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1959), 87<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- <sup>24</sup> *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, pp. 160-1. Recounting this story, Abdul Haqq mentions the name of Nizam-ud-Din's mother as Bibi Zulekha, *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, pp. 303-4. For Khusrau Khan's rebellion and execution of the Sultan, see *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 185b-189a.

- 25 For more details, see *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 87b-90a; *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fol. 183a; *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*, p. 79.
- 26 *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p.71.
- 27 *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, fols. 34a-b.
- 28 *Ibid.*, fols. 21b-22a.
- 29 See Richard M. Eaton, 'The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Baba Farid', in Barbara D. Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority – The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 333-56.
- 30 For accounts of the indifference of the Chishtis towards wealth, see Abbas Rizvi, *History of Sufism in India*, p. 123. For the reports of accumulation of wealth by the Suhrawardis, see *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 169.
- 31 Abbas Rizvi, *History of Sufism in India*, pp. 128-29. Also see *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, fols. 9b-10a.
- 32 *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, pp. 537-40.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 541-42.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 542.
- 35 *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, fols. 97b-99b. Barni refers to the recovery of the amount distributed by Khusrau Khan, but makes no mention of Nizam-ud-Din Auliya in this context see *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 199b-200a.
- 36 For the bestowal of kingship upon the prince shortly before the death of the Sultan, see *Qiwam-ul-Aqa'id*, p. 96. Ibn Batuta, *Aja'ib-ul-Asfar*, Urdu trans. Maulwi Muhammad Husain (Islamabad, 1983), p. 92. For Barni's account of the ruler's accidental death, see *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi*, fols. 209b-210a.
- 37 Digby, 'The Sufi Shaikh and the Sultan', p.74.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p.75.
- 39 Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I, ed. Abdul Hayy Habibi (Kabul: Anjuman Tarikh-i Afghanistan, 1963-64), pp. 441-2.
- 40 *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 61<sup>st</sup> meeting. For a different version of the account of bestowal of kingship to Iltutmish, see Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Ms. I.O. Islamic 3320, OIOC, British Library, London, fol. 28a. K.A. Nizami accepts these stories as true, *Studies in Medieval Indian History and Culture* (Allahabad, 1966), p. 16; while Abbas Rizvi rejects them as myths, *History of Sufism in India*, p. 135, f.n.2.
- 41 *Rahat-ul-Qulub*, collection of the discourses of Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, compilation attributed to Nizam-ud-Din Auliya', Urdu trans. (Delhi: Maktaba Jam-i-Noor, n.d.), p. 34; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 60;

*Siyar-ul-Arifin*, fols. 34a-b. For the hostility between Qubacha and Zakariya, see *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- <sup>42</sup> *Asrar-ul-Auliya*, collection of the conversations of Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar compiled by Shaikh Badr-ud-Din Ishaq, Urdu trans. M. Muinuddin Durdai (Karachi: Nafis Academy, 1975), pp. 183-4; *Fawa'id-us-Salikin*, conversations of Shaikh Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, compilation attributed to Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, Urdu trans. (Delhi: Maktaba Jam-i-Noor, n.d.), p. 15; *Rahat-ul-Qulub*, collection of the discourses of Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, compilation attributed to Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, Urdu trans. (Delhi: Maktaba Jam-i-Noor, n.d.), p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. I, 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- <sup>44</sup> In Muslim folk-belief, the *pari* or fairy is reported to be a female *jinn*. Identified as companions of God and worshipped by the pre-Islamic Arabs, *jinn*s have survived in Islamic societies as malevolent supernatural creatures. It is believed that there are two types of *jinn*s - Muslim and infidel. The latter are supposed to be more wicked and difficult to be controlled. For a note on the places where they live, their behaviour towards human beings, particularly the illnesses afflicted by them, and the precautions taken to avoid falling in their trap, see the entry, 'Djinn', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, Vol. II (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), pp.546-50.

<sup>45</sup> *Rahat-ul-Qulub*, pp. 16, 65, 87; *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. V, 29<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- <sup>46</sup> *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 51<sup>st</sup> meeting; *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 17<sup>th</sup> meeting; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 96. For the later use of amulets among Muslims in India, see Jafar Sharif, *Islam in India or the Qanun-i-Islam - The Customs of the Muslims of India*, trans. G.A. Herklots, revised by William Crooke (London, 1975), pp. 254-5.

<sup>47</sup> Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and its Healing Traditions* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 29.

<sup>48</sup> Raziuddin Aquil, 'Conversion in Chishti Sufi Literature (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Centuries)', *Indian Historical Review*, 24, 1997-98, p. 79.

<sup>49</sup> *Qiwam-ul-Aqa'id*, pp. 33-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. For the miracles of the Prophet, see A.J. Wensinck, 'Mu'djiza', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, Vol. VII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), p. 295.

<sup>51</sup> *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 44<sup>th</sup> meeting.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, 21<sup>st</sup> meeting; *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 88.

<sup>53</sup> *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. IV, 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

<sup>54</sup> *Khair-ul-Majalis*, 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

<sup>55</sup> *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. V, 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

## The Study of Sufism in Medieval India: An Overview

- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, 26<sup>th</sup> meeting; *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, fols. 129a-130b.
- <sup>57</sup> The Suhrawardis by contrast disliked these wandering mystics, *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vol. I, 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting; *Khair-ul-Majalis*, 38<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- <sup>58</sup> For a detailed discussion of the activities of these deviant groups, their social background and the way they were treated by the Sufi shaikhs of different *silsilas*, see Digby, 'Qalandars and Related Groups', pp. 60-108.
- <sup>59</sup> Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India*.
- <sup>60</sup> Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, reprint (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- <sup>61</sup> Richard Eaton has questioned all these explanations in his, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 113-19.
- <sup>62</sup> This contrast has been noted in Nizami's numerous writings. See also Rizvi, *History of Sufism in India*, pp. 215-26.
- <sup>63</sup> See, for instance, S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1993), pp. 54-56; M. Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1985), pp. 297-8.
- <sup>64</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Indian Islam', in Raziuddin Aquil (ed.), *Sufism and Society in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 70-81.
- <sup>65</sup> Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, Second Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- <sup>66</sup> S.A.A. Rizvi, 'Islamic Proselytization: Seventh to Sixteenth Centuries', in Aquil (ed.), *Sufism and Society*, pp. 52-69.
- <sup>67</sup> For a biographical sketch, see *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, pp. 54-5.
- <sup>68</sup> *Khair-ul-Majalis*, 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. For a more elaborate account of conversion at the hands of Usman Harwani, see Jamali Kamboh, *Siyar-ul-'Arifin*, Urdu trans. Ayub Qadiri (Lahore, 1976), [Hereafter *Siyar-ul-'Arifin* (Urdu trans.)], pp. 6-8.
- <sup>69</sup> *Siyar-ul-'Arifin* (Urdu trans.), pp. 6-8, 14-16, 43-44.
- <sup>70</sup> See, for instance, Dara Shukoh, *Safinat-ul-Auliya*, Urdu trans. Muhammad Ali Lutfi (Delhi: n.d.), pp. 127-28.
- <sup>71</sup> *Siyar-ul-'Arifin* (Urdu trans.), pp. 231-33.
- <sup>72</sup> This contrast has been noted in numerous writings of K.A. Nizami and S.A.A. Rizvi. For some of the references, see Raziuddin Aquil, 'Sufi Cults, Politics and Conversion', p. 195.
- <sup>73</sup> Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dehlawi, *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar* (Delhi: Mataba Muhtabai, n.d.), p. 139.

- <sup>74</sup> For details, see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1955), pp. 106-7. Surprisingly, the author ignores this evidence and goes on to say that there was no account of conversion in early mystic records, *ibid.*, p. 107.
- <sup>75</sup> Bruce B. Lawrence, 'Early Indo-Muslim Saints and Conversion', in Y. Friedmann (ed.), *Islam in Asia, Vol. I, South Asia* (Jerusalem: Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation, 1984), pp. 116-17.
- <sup>76</sup> *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*, Vo. IV, 40<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- <sup>77</sup> Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims*, pp. 165-66.
- <sup>78</sup> Simon Digby, 'Hawk and Dove in Sufi Combat', *Pembroke Papers I*, 1990, pp. 13-17.
- <sup>79</sup> Yohanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- <sup>80</sup> J.M.S. Baljon, 'Shah Waliullah and the Dargah', in Aquil, *Sufism and Society*, pp. 110-17.
- <sup>81</sup> *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, pp. 56-57.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- <sup>83</sup> For this and other references to the visit to Muin-ud-Din's tomb at Ajmer in the fourteenth century, see Simon Digby, 'Early Pilgrimages to the Graves of Muinuddin Sijzi and other Indian Chishti Shaikhs', in M. Israel and N.K. Wagle (eds.), *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Aziz Ahmad* (Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp. 95-100.
- <sup>84</sup> For traditional, political history of Bengal, see Jadu Nath Sarkar (ed.), *The History of Bengal, Muslim Period, 1200-1757* (Patna: Academica Asiatica, 1973); Syed Ejaz Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate: Politics, Economy and Coins (AD 1205-1576)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003). Also see Richard Eaton's impressive study, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier*. For a study of devotional Islam in the Deccan, see Richard Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700, Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); also see, Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Centre* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Simon Digby, *Sufis and Soldiers in Awrangzeb's Deccan: Malfuzat-i-Naqshbandiya* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001); Nile Green, *Indian Sufism since the Seventeenth Century: Saints, Books and Empires in the Muslim Deccan* (London: Routledge, 2006).
- <sup>85</sup> Simon Digby, 'The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India', in Aquil, (ed.), *Sufism and Society*, pp. 118-47.

# Fear, Scarcity and Repression in Kolkata during the First World War

*Suchetana Chattopadhyay*

*All landscapes and all weathers freeze with fear,  
But none have ever thought, the legends say,  
The time allowed made it impossible;  
For even the most pessimistic set  
The limit of their errors at a year.  
What friends could there be left then to betray,  
What joy take longer to atone for; yet  
Who could complete without the extra day  
The journey that should take no time at all?*  
—W. H. Auden, *The Quest*

## Introduction

Despite losing its political status as the capital of the British Indian Empire to Delhi in 1912, Kolkata continued to be seen as second only to London. At the end of the First World War, this dubious distinction conferred by the colonial city-planners vanished. The First World War (1914-1918) represented the transit years which facilitated Kolkata's fall from imperial pre-eminence.<sup>1</sup> A social climate rooted in the expansion and intensification of fear, scarcity and repression marked the public and the private. Woven into the fabric of life and death in a war-time city, it is to these components of quotidian existence that this article turns.

## Fear

The widespread anxiety and panic triggered by war, and stemming from deteriorating material conditions, rising violence and state repression assisted the transition of social life from a colonial-civilian to a colonial-martial mode. Within the structure of colonialism, certain micro-level alterations fuelled new fears. The extraordinary expansion of the colonial repressive apparatus and deteriorating living conditions of the colonial subjects came to be

underlined by a terror of authority and articulated in varying degrees through the public sphere.

### **Troops**

Fear was often articulated through outrage; this was palpable in the attitudes to the presence of troops in the streets. Indian newspapers, representing the social concerns of different segments of the middle-classes, regularly reported racist assaults by European soldiers. The *Moslem Hitaishi* (The Moslem Well-wisher) referred to a fracas between soldiers and students at the Sealdah Railway Station in 1914, and held that the matter was serious enough to call for an enquiry by the higher authorities.<sup>2</sup> The *Bangavasi* (The Bengal Resident) referred to abuse and assault of 'Indian wayfarers' by 'drunken European soldiers' 'in the southern section of the town on New Year's Day' 1915 and asked: 'Will not the military and police authorities inquire and take the necessary measures of redress?' The *Hitavadi* (The Utilitarian) complained of similar scenes in early 1915, arguing that the arrogant conduct of territorial troops in Calcutta created 'great local ill-feeling'. The soldiers were accused of boarding tram-cars and refusing to pay fares and harsh conduct towards the passers-by. A Bengali clerk was assaulted in the Old Court House Street, a stone's throw from the High Court; his teeth were smashed. The matter was settled by the Commissioner of Police who made the offender pay a compensation of Rs.15 to the injured man. The *Hitavadi* felt: 'Apart from the lightness or otherwise, of this punishment, the question arises if these men cannot be kept under proper restraint, in view of the outrages they are committing on the people of the country'.<sup>3</sup> Though racist violence was routine, the authorities responded with a different level of dismay in the face of intra-European violence. Forcible 'reconciliation' through the strategic intervention of the police could not close such a case; it generally ended up in the court-room with the Judge expressing amazement over a 'conversation' between two 'adult' men that could degenerate into a fracas.<sup>4</sup> These incidents demonstrated the way white male subjects were projected as the sole referents of mature and 'civilized' behaviour. The war heightened the awareness of racialised subjecthood among the colonized, redefining and reinforcing contestations of the white superiority complex. By



1918, the guarded and defensive position of the colonizers was evident in the face of mounting accusations of racism; the European was urged to take 'greater interest in life and society of the East' and be less aloof than in the past if 'his influence' and 'his interest' were to continue.<sup>5</sup>

### Crime

Fear further alienated the colonized from colonial rule. It also exposed the hatred and suspicions harboured by the upper-classes of society towards the poor. A recurring anxiety among the propertied Indians during the war was the fear of losing proprietor control over the cityscape at a time of increasing scarcity. Some voices, such as the *Calcutta Budget*, an Indian-owned English language paper, diagnosed the 'recrudescence of lawlessness' in war-induced poverty.<sup>6</sup> The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* felt projecting the poor as criminals was rife and observed 'one of the terrible engines of repression is section 104 of the Criminal Procedure Code' whereby 'a person can be harassed and sent to jail if he cannot prove to the Court's satisfaction' that 'he has ostensible means of livelihood'; the police frequently abused this law, admitted even 'by Magistrate Swinhoe'.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the contradictions of class-formation under colonial aegis were manifest through strident arguments that sections of the criminalised urban poor were about to take over the streets; this position was advanced with demands for police protection even if the very same voices could not fully rely on the colonial state to uphold justice. The *Nayak* (The Leader) mixed Hindu communalism, security concerns of proprietor classes on potential disorder from below, and suspicions towards the colonial law and order machinery with loyalty to the imperial war-effort:

Our Commissioner of Police is arranging for European soldiers (volunteers) to patrol Calcutta streets, but the coming of the goondas is not being arrested. A few days more and the Kabuliwallas too will have arrived and enlivened the city. The more houses in Bara Bazar are being vacated, the more are the dens of goondas from Mirzapore Street increasing. The Mussalman goondas of Gendatala are holding meetings every day, committees are sitting at Halsibagan and even the Chaudhuris

(leaders) of the bullock-cart drivers are holding meetings. Furthermore, there is no telling how many funny reports about the war are being circulated. The tendency of these reports is to enhance German prestige at the expense of the British Government. As a result the spirit of discontent is being distinctly aggravated among the lower classes of the town. It cannot even be imagined that the police are not aware of all this; but what steps of redress are being taken in this connection? It is true that if there is a riot or trouble, it will be put down by the use of shots, but those shots will kill some innocent men, too. We shall feel reassured if the authorities take the proper steps.

The paper advocated the interests of Marwari commercial capital and bemoaned: 'In spite of English police guards, murders are taking place at Bara Bazar and goondas are robbing passers-by. More than a hundred goondas are said to have come down from Benaras and Mirzapore. No steps have been apparently taken to keep them under control. 30,000 Marwaris have left town and some disturbance is inevitable under the circumstances. Bara Bazar needs a stricter police watch than it is receiving'.<sup>8</sup> Not to be outdone, the *Mohammadi*, adopted a similar class attitude though it did not uphold a reactive communal position:

... the College Street and Chitpur Road crossings of the Harrison Road tramway line in Calcutta are badly infested with pickpockets who regularly rob tramway passengers while entering or leaving cars. The local shopkeepers and tramway conductors do not dare to remonstrate with them. They carry on their nefarious business under the eyes of police constables. The detective police can easily catch them if they keep an eye on them for a few days. We have heard that the ruffians do not shrink from threatening witnesses against them even before the daroga. The detective police is requested to take up the matter in right earnest.<sup>9</sup>

As segments of the middle-classes drawn from the ranks of the Hindu *bhadralok*<sup>10</sup> and Pan-Islamist intelligentsia faced state

persecution for sedition, crime from below was projected as a more appropriate yet neglected zone of police vigilance.

### **State terror, deprivation, disease**

Armed revolutionaries and the repression unleashed on them by the government, the soaring price rise of essential commodities and high mortality levels from infectious diseases in the absence of adequate healthcare added to the prevailing mood of collective decline. The *Darshak* (The Spectator) noted: 'The present insecurity has added to the already existing economic embarrassments of the people ... The rigours of the arms act on the one hand and free uses of modern deadly weapons on the other, has put the law-abiding subjects at a disadvantage'. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* severely criticised a Bengali loyalist of the Empire for claiming the 'cry for Home Rule or a measure of real and living self-government raised by 90 per cent of the educated community is mischievous and salvation of India consists in adding a few more members to the Legislative and Executive Councils' and declared: 'Sir Satyendra had nothing to say regarding the condition of the country. The people are growing poorer and poorer; the majority of them do not know what a full meal is throughout the year; famine conditions prevail all over the peninsula; the policy of repression and police rule are emasculating the population; and above all, malaria, plague and other deadly diseases are ruthlessly decimating the nation'.<sup>11</sup> The pathology of state and society was brought to the fore; yet, the tone fear and helplessness persisted and could not be erased from even the most ringing voices of outrage and protest.

### **Speed**

Feelings of being unsafe in the city streets were magnified by the motor vehicle which became a familiar sight during the war years. Decrease in the number of Hackney carriages in 1913-14, and the resulting loss of livelihood for a segment of workers, was partly due to a rapid growth of motor cab traffic.<sup>12</sup> Apart from soldiers and criminals, cars were perceived as another novel source of danger. Speed came to be conflated with crime; its crushing crescendo, unleashed from the top by the European and Indian rich, was read as a sign of disorder by the middle-class public,

suffering from want, excluded from the world of luxury, and forced to jostle with the poor in the busy streets. The *Darshak* argued in 1914 that 'walking in Calcutta streets' was 'gradually becoming full of dangers'. The paper pointed out that an enormous increase in the numbers of motor cars in the city was leading to almost daily occurrence of fatal and serious accidents; sometimes the drivers were charged with running over people and punished by courts, but most of them managed to get away. The paper also listed 'bullock carts, carriages drawn by horses and so forth' and held: 'It is, therefore, easily conceivable how difficult and dangerous the Calcutta streets have become for pedestrians. The attention of the Municipal Commissioners is drawn to the matter'. The paper elaborated on middle-class concerns over chaos in the streets by linking the increased volume of traffic with a rising crime rate and reiterated the need for urban 'order':

Then there is the danger of being robbed by pickpockets and molested by goondas, who throng in bodies in every corner where the traffic is crowded. The pickpockets after rifling people's purses pass it on in the twinkling of an eye to their companions. If any one of them is caught, his companions come in numbers and secure him from the hands of his captors. People believe that these goondas often carry dangerous weapons with them. Hence they do not dare catch them, even if they can do so. The attention of the Commissioners of Police is drawn to the matter.<sup>13</sup>

### **Urban decay**

The fear of urban chaos intersected with predictions of impending decay. The idea and reality of decay also crept into the pattern of future centre-state relations being set; the regional bourgeoisie were among the first to protest against its implications as they stood to lose from the transfer of capital. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* highlighted the proposal of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce at their forthcoming general meeting to pass a resolution 'emphatically protesting against the excessive outlay of public funds on a new capital city at Delhi'. The Bengal Chamber feared a further decline in infrastructure and held that Indian capitalist interests were more 'vitaly interested in this question than

European merchants' and that resources would be better utilized for the 'furtherance of industry, commercial and railway development of India. Indians need money to protect themselves from famine and pestilence. Their custodian, the provincial government only gets a pittance from the supreme government who has to nourish the Delhi fad at any cost'. A second significant objection to the transfer of capital to Delhi was the non-existence of 'public opinion in that city to exercise a healthy control on the doings over the Government of India'. If it could not be given up, it was suggested: '...let it be a ceremonial capital with administrative capital at any other place with strong public opinion'.<sup>14</sup>

The foundations of war-time fear drew on an array of social ingredients and perspectives. A rapidly changing city, over which even the upper-classes among the subject-populations had little control, bred new anxieties; these were fused to arrive at phobic responses that rested on uncertain 'structures of feeling' embedded in a contingent reality.

### **Scarcity**

Fear intersected with and became operational at a time of scarcity. Songs carried this note. Two songs, rooted in their respective political contexts, were composed by Rabindranath Tagore during the beginning of the Swadeshi Movement directed against the first partition of Bengal and the outbreak of the First World War accompanied by rumour and reality of famine. A Goddess of war and plenty offers refuge, reassurance and compassion in 1905. She returns as the source of imminent terror and potential devastation for the Bengal countryside in 1914. While vacillating between the forms of Kali and Durga, and glorified by Hindu Bengali nationalism as the symbol of a chained motherland, she became the representative of contradictory political meanings to the poet within the course of a decade.

### **Hunger**

Immediately before and during the war, the city came to be projected as the epicentre of a hungry hinterland. As Kolkata was drawn into the war-effort, gloomy and dejected forecasts of a regional famine were advanced. The fear of imminent and

widespread hunger soon became a reality in a climate of spiralling food prices. The *Moslem Hitaishi* observed:

Food-stuffs are getting dearer and dearer in Calcutta. It is true that the prices of rice have not risen. On the other hand, fish and meat are extremely scarce. Rui fish sells at from Rs. 12 to Rs. 1 per seer. The supply of Hilsa fish is scarce and other fish are almost equally dear. Vegetables are no cheaper. Sugar is selling very dear also. The poor and middle classes are feeling the pinch. Many of the wage-earning classes have been thrown out of work. The prices of necessities of life rather than food-stuffs are also high, even house-rents are rising. Large numbers of people are sitting idle without employment because of the stoppage of the shipping traffic.

The paper focused on the miserable condition of people of Bengal due to the failure of the jute industry and destruction of paddy in 1914 and felt: 'The terrible war now raging in Europe will not perhaps let this Government do much to help the people'.<sup>15</sup> The *Chabbis-Pargana Vartavaha* (The 24-Parganas News Carrier), published from Bhabanipur in Kolkata, held 'the Bengalis now find themselves in the midst of a veritable battle of *Kurukshetra* because of the shadow of famine which envelops them on all sides'. Referring to crime, the *Calcutta Budget*, declared:

... the root-cause of it is poverty ... it behoves the government to turn its attention to the improvement of the economic situation before passing any repressive laws ... The unrestricted export of articles of food is not desirable in the interests of the country, nor are abnormally high prices conducive to the growth of prosperity. In Bengal, the price of rice has risen so high as to be beyond the reach of the middle-class people.<sup>16</sup>

A contemporary observer later noted that the burden of surviving the war devolved on and overwhelmed common people. Spiraling prices of food and semi-starved conditions preoccupied the poor and the lower middle-classes. Their extremely reduced circumstances made them indifferent to the political trajectory of the war. The only concern was the daily scarcity that made essential commodities, like rice and cloth, slip out of their reach.

Conversations overheard in the slum enclaves located in the backyards of rich neighbourhoods, such as Ballygunge, reflected the losing fight of the working-classes against mounting inflation in food prices.<sup>17</sup>

As the conditions kept deteriorating, the issues related to the poor received increased attention from sections of the intelligentsia. Yet, no attempt was made to channel war-time popular grievances against the hardships imposed by colonialism into an anti-colonial mass movement. The mainstream nationalist leadership had extended its support to the imperial war-effort in the hope of future political reforms. The upper- and middle-class attitudes towards the poor ranged from a liberal-humanist, paternalistic concern to impulses of undisguised hatred and terror.

### **Colonial capital in action**

The public that carried the burden of war, did not own the city. The great bulk of the population was concentrated at the bottom of society. A large segment of the working-classes were drawn from the Muslim poor, the majority of whom were Urdu-speaking migrants visible in the factories and the docks. The most profitable enterprises, such as the jute industry, were monopolized by colonial capital. The port and docks that shipped men and resources on a massive scale to support the war-effort were properties of the colonial government.<sup>18</sup> The intensity of material hardship during the war years meant the real wage of the workers declined while capital flourished as never before.<sup>19</sup> Jute and tea yielded super profits during the war.<sup>20</sup>

The European officialdom at the top combined the rhetoric of 'improvement' with indifference and loathing towards the poor. Montague Massey, a veteran representative of colonial capital published his recollections of the city in 1918 with the aim of donating his royalties to the Red Cross and dedicated the book to Lady Carmichael, the 'Founder of the Bengal Women's War Fund'; he happily observed that in many parts of the city 'handsome residences' were erected, wide thoroughfares built and new roads created by clearing slums and dwelling houses of the poor in the course of the 1910s.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to the massive disruptions caused in the lives of ordinary people by colonial policies, existence of the rulers remained largely undisturbed. They were alert to the

political challenges but their daily lives continued as before. Business operations in white preserves such as the jute and tea industry, sale of profitable commodities like opium under government supervision, rising prices of wolfram and cotton, much in demand at war-time, occupied them.<sup>22</sup> Leisure hours continued to be devoted to sports, horse-racing, club events, weddings, social gatherings, plays to entertain the European community; sometimes anecdotal accounts of the proceedings of the criminal and small causes courts, arrests of Indian 'anarchists' in the city streets, 'smart' actions of the police that foiled escape attempts by political detainees, prosecution of smugglers and sale of motor cars claimed their attention.<sup>23</sup> Their path was illuminated with the novelty of electric lights. 'Despite the severe economy which had to be observed', the municipal authorities noted with satisfaction during the middle years of the war, 'the most notable feature was the installation of seventy-three 900 candle-power electric lamps in Chowringhee Road' and the electrification of widened portions of Ballygunge Circular Road.<sup>24</sup>

### **Reality of urban decay**

Measures of urban remodelling from the top, such as the transport and lighting revolutions and the widening of roads, bred their own paradoxes by further marginalizing the poor through loss of livelihoods and dwelling. Yet, the reality of creeping urban decay could not be completely suppressed. While the Indian rich, as mentioned, expressed their uneasiness through their own platforms, the colonizers also voiced their apprehensions. The *Report of the Municipal Administration of Calcutta 1912-1913* optimistically observed:

The year 1912-13 to which this report relates ushered in a new era in the history of Calcutta; it ceased to be the metropolis of India, but it became the capital of the newly created Presidency of Bengal. Its trade, commerce, industries and its civic amenities have all developed during the year and there seems no reason for doubting that its prosperity will continue or for apprehending that it may forfeit its claim to be the first city in India. Some apprehension was entertained as to a fall in the revenue of the Corporation on account of



the transfer of the capital, but from the experience of the past year it appears that the progressive increase in the revenue of the Corporation has been well maintained.

Though the *Report of 1915-1916* maintained that the war had not affected municipal finances, the *Report of 1917-1918* declared at the conclusion of the war, the set-back to municipal progress had been removed; however progress was not going to be as 'rapid as might be wished for' due to difficulties in securing necessary supplies and the fact that prices continued to remain high. The report admitted road repairs, sewerage and drainage improvement/extension and slum-improvements had been held up by lack of funds and high prices of material which the municipality could not afford.<sup>25</sup> As usual, the chief victims of municipal neglect were the poor.

### **Deaths in the city**

Despite their rosy interpretations of reality, the municipal planners were unable to hide the 'Deaths in the City'. Throughout the war years, mortality among women and children, the most vulnerable and under-nourished social segments, remained high and reproduced the patterns set by the pre-war years. Plague, dengue, malaria, small-pox, diphtheria, cholera, respiratory diseases etc were regular visitors to the city. The municipal authorities declared without any irony in 1914 that the general health of the city remained 'good' despite an increase in average death-rate over that of the previous year. They found the declining birth-rate and increase in mortality among women and children 'perplexing'.<sup>26</sup> As the death-rate from tuberculosis, a disease that stalked the poor and the lower middle-classes continued to mount, the corporation considered a proposal to set up a hospital with state assistance. The *Report of the Municipal Administration of Calcutta 1914-1915* observed:

High rate of infant mortality and the spread of tuberculosis are matters of grave concern. The Commissioners' attention has also been drawn to the high rate of mortality among females. They hope that the Health Department will spare no efforts to combat these evils. The Commissioners suggest the distribution

of vernacular leaflets with instructions on domestic hygiene and treatment of infants. Strict supervision over food served and cooked in unhealthy conditions in eating houses/hawkers/ shops patronized by labouring classes of people.

A 'lack of education', rather than poverty and insufficient healthcare, was held responsible for the high infant mortality while a small-pox epidemic raged in the city during 1915.<sup>27</sup> A higher toll was claimed by Influenza, the global pandemic described as the 'war-fever' that accompanied Armistice in 1918. Death of women was 15% higher than men. While classifying the victims, according to religion, the colonial authorities prosaically observed that, 'Hindus and Muslims shared almost identical death-rates'. Only 'one Non-Asiatic' died from the flu, revealing the way healthcare fortified the colonizers from its fatal attacks. Half of the municipal health department staff came down with the fever. All departments of the corporation 'were paralyzed'. Approximately 50% of the staff was 'attacked'. The flu, projected as a warring enemy alien in official parlance and perceived as a successor of the vanquished Axis powers, showed 'a truly explosive character'. Schools were closed. Student hostels and big offices were affected. The postal and tramway services were thrown into a state of disarray. The coolies were infected and could not carry out the maintenance works undertaken by the municipality. Increase in temporary sheds at government-run hospitals to house patients could not accommodate all the victims.<sup>28</sup>

Scarcity during war-time, expressed through worsening hunger and an intensification of long-term structural deprivations, was directed against the colonized, especially the poor and the lower middle-classes. The indifference of the rulers was articulated in policies such as increased prices, loss of livelihood, reduced municipal services and inadequate healthcare as epidemics and infectious diseases pulverized the city. Since scarcity bred alienation and opposition, the state responded to political and social discontent by resorting to heightened repression.

### **Repression**

An urban fabric shot through with political repression, material anxiety and mental trauma saw the early forays into modern

psychiatry. Girindrasekhar Bose (1887-1953), who corresponded with Freud from the early 1920s, explored the theme of psychological repression during the war years and later developed an independent, contextually grounded explanation.<sup>29</sup> His theory of the 'opposite wish,' spoke of latent desires without any direct outlet, which found their way into dreams, language, and social practice. Bose held 'active submission to passivity', 'destruction of activity', 'resignation' to the existing environment to be socially widespread and not confined to his neurotic patients only.<sup>30</sup>

### **The war in Kolkata**

The war generated contrary impulses among large sections of the population in a climate of violent state actions and counter-violence. Arriving from Eastern Bengal in Kolkata during the war years, the writer Pabitra Gangopadhyay was struck by the feverish speed of human-beings, trams, horse-drawn carriages, automobiles, rickshaws in the streets. He was to admit that his migration from the rural to the urban was motivated by this search for a crowded, animated space where history was being shaped by the conflict between the old and the new in the daily life of people. He wanted to 'merge' with this cosmopolitan, frenetic air of the big city. Yet war-time Calcutta was to disappoint him. He found the 'life-force' of the city sapped by the political passivity of the rich who supported the imperial war-effort and the war-induced scarcity faced by the poor that found no redress.<sup>31</sup> The repressive aura of the period was marked by politically static expressions of 'loyalty to the Empire' and ineffective oppositions to it. Gangopadhyay noticed, while the mainstream nationalist leadership supported the war-effort in the hope of attaining 'Dominion Status' once British victory was achieved, sections of the middle-classes supported Germany. Casual conversations touched on the 'bravery' of the Kaiser and the German Crown-Prince. Others harboured strong suspicions regarding Britain's intentions in a climate of overwhelming political repression and material hardship; they refused to believe the promises of the colonial authorities on future 'self-government' and were vindicated after the war. However, with the exception of the revolutionary nationalists who were heavily and swiftly suppressed, no attempt

was made to politically articulate the insecurity, fear and misery stalking the masses under the Raj.<sup>32</sup>

The widespread alienation of the times and suppression of its political articulations found myriad social expressions. Crimes committed by children steadily rose between 1914 and 1915, demonstrating the depths of hardship visiting the poor. In 1915, 1073 'juvenile delinquents' were placed before Magistrates on criminal charges against 923 in 1914 and 530 in 1913. Among those who were 12 years or under, 117 were admonished and discharged, acquitted or struck off, 21 were tried as first offenders, 14 were sent to reformatories, 25 were detained till the rising of the court, 72 were whipped, 220 were fined, and 3 were imprisoned in Juvenile Jail. 804 children were convicted and dealt with in a similar way in 1916.<sup>33</sup> Official and Indian proprietor indifference was apparent towards 'ordinary criminals', including those yet to reach adulthood, booked or prosecuted for violating laws protecting private property; the war-time controversy surrounding middle-class teenage boys sent to prison as 'political offenders' by-passed the conditions of working-class children in prisons and government facilities. The rate of 'ordinary' and 'political' crimes meant the number of people arrested remained high. In 1914, 14592 people passed through the police lock-ups; in 1915, they numbered 16,768 and in 1916 there was a slight decrease to 16,503. Occasionally, the underdogs turned the table on their captors. In 1916, 32 persons escaped from police custody, as against 27 in 1915 and 36 in 1914. While 28 were recaptured, 4 remained at large.<sup>34</sup> Next year, Inspector Briggs was outwitted and locked up for an hour in his own car by a petty criminal.<sup>35</sup> A large number of people committed suicide; a significant section killed themselves through opium overdose. The drug was freely available in the city; even the police administration made money from issuing licenses for its sale.<sup>36</sup>

The consumption of alcohol in the city increased during the war. The number of licensed liquor shops multiplied; there were 150 in 1916 and 249 by 1918.<sup>37</sup> The chattering classes were driven to tea-houses. Millions of cups of tea were drunk over endless conversations; the liquid stimulated and calmed the worried and the anxious, the inert and the worn-out, the European boss and the office-clerk, the intellectual and the manual labourer. As alarm,

rumour and panic set in with the government declaring the port-city to be a 'defended harbour',<sup>38</sup> a surge in the number of tea-shops was registered. In November 1915, they numbered 444; by November 1916, they had multiplied to 1124.<sup>39</sup> During the first three years of the war, the tea industry, a profitable preserve of colonial capital as already mentioned, flourished at a record-breaking rate and the volume of tea-drinking increased in leaps and bounds.<sup>40</sup> A contemporary report on the 'popularity and success of tea-drinking in Calcutta' noted the attendant extension of the colonized public sphere: 'Formerly, the shops were mostly small, smoky places, and they were badly patronized. At the present time many of them are large and airy, and they sell hundreds of cups of tea daily. At first it was very difficult to persuade people to start the shops, but as tea drinking became increasingly popular the difficulty lessened'.<sup>41</sup>

### **Middle-class youth and 'sedition'**

Middle-class young men who frequented these tea-shops and the issues linked with them that were raised in the public sphere, posed a problem to the colonial government, their guardians and to themselves during the war as they confronted economic desperation and racism. Most students were migrants to the city and studied in education institutions without any government support. During the war, escalating prices of food and the diminished income of middle-class families directly affected them. Over-crowding in the colleges, dearth of student accommodation, high prices of paper, and infectious diseases, such as the small-pox epidemic of 1916, obstructed the study.<sup>42</sup> Emerging as a political constituency during this period, a fact picked up by nationalist and pan-Islamist newspapers that campaigned for student welfare,<sup>43</sup> they could not be expected to offer 'unflinching' loyalty to the Empire.

Even Presidency College, a show-piece of colonial pedagogy and the well-funded among government-run institutions, displayed contrary pulls among its student body. Pramatha Nath Banerjea, editor and resident of Eden Hostel, and decades later a Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, declared in the first issue of the Presidency College Magazine in November, 1914:

We make our first appearance amidst the excitement of a crisis unparalleled in the experience of anyone now living. Far away from the scene of strife we hear only the echoes of what is likely to prove the greatest war in the world's history. Tremendous issues hang in the balance; but 'out of evil cometh good' and the most cheering outcome of the present war is the manifestation of the solidarity of interest and the unity of sentiment which prevail throughout the British Empire. A wave of loyalty has touched the shores of the Overseas dominions of the Emperor. The peoples of India accept the British cause not only as subjects of the British Empire but as comrades in a struggle for existence, as vital to their interests as to those of any other part of the Empire. The dispatch of Indian troops to fight on European soil for the first time in history, the voluntary grant of all the expenses of the Indian expeditionary forces from the Indian exchequer are significant facts. They give happy assurance of the steady development of better fellowship throughout the British Empire.<sup>44</sup>

Professors, members of the office and the library staff agreed to make monthly contributions from their salaries at a fixed rate as long as the war lasted. Student representatives were asked to raise subscriptions in the class-rooms. Ambulance classes were planned to train student volunteers. Despite this 'wave of loyalty' and 'deep sympathy' towards the government 'as dutiful citizens of the British Empire', a sense of disquiet was present from the beginning. That war bred economic hardship for the common folk was recognized in the measure 'to join the movement that has been set on foot for the relief of the people who are likely to be thrown out of employment in consequence of the stagnation of business during the present crisis'. Certain paradoxes could be deciphered in the attitudes of the European academics as well. The Principal, H. R. James, in his address before the students, spoke against the perils of ultra-nationalism; he asked them to rise above party politics, regional parochialism and only display patriotism in extreme cases such as the contemporary crisis. He cautioned against becoming too involved in the war-effort and wanted his

pupils to concentrate more on college-level activities. A liberal imperialist upholder of the ideological state apparatus and a reluctant advocate of the war, he may have felt unsettled by the implications of 'patriotism' in the colony. A sympathetic review of H. G. Wells' anti-war science-fiction novel *The World Set Free-The Story of Mankind* was printed in the college magazine. The name of the reviewer was not given. He supported the war-effort but displayed the same vein of liberal ambiguity as James:

The great war is put in the year 1956 or 1957, it is not quite clear which, and its occasion and origin resemble pretty closely those of the war which broke out in August this year.

...

The war comes suddenly as this war has done. Its occasion is an attack on 'the Slav Confederacy' by 'Central European Powers,' with France and England going to the help of the Slavs.

...

Features of the real outbreak of the war which Mr. Wells does not anticipate are the extraordinarily quiet resolution with which the people of England have entered in the struggle; he makes the British public 'noisily patriotic'...He does not anticipate the wonderful unanimity of the British Empire. He does not anticipate the part which is going to be played by the expeditionary force from India.

...

It is the moral ideas put forth that are the real subjects of this book. There is an overwhelming demonstration of the atrocious folly of war between nations and incidental exhibition of the irrationality of the political and legal systems holding sway at the opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

...

Mr. H. G. Wells' 'Story of Mankind' repays somewhat more careful reading than an ordinary novel.

Wells wrote of atomic warfare, of bombs dropped from airplanes that destroyed entire cities. The reviewer was shaken by the idea that the bombs 'go on destroying within the area of their

activity' and as a result of radiation 'Paris, Berlin, London, every capital city in Europe, are wholly or partially ruined'. The old order perished from the war and a Utopian society based on humane uses of science was built on the ashes of the old. According to the narrative, the first steps towards 'turning atomic energy to economic uses and the further exploitation of that discovery' was started in 1933 'by a young chemist called Holsten', a process 'in which the firm Dass-Tata play a leading part'. A world-state emerged where 'very little labour suffices for the necessities of mankind and nearly everyone's time is given to artistic production, to science, or to amusements. The select spirits devote themselves to research; the average man takes to art industries and gardening'.<sup>45</sup>

The 'average' person's attitude to the war as a sphere of divisions between the social imperialist and anti-war left in the West was also represented before the students. 'May Day on the Yarra Bank' by E. F. Oaten humourously 'recalled' a public debate he supposedly witnessed in Melbourne in 1910. At a meeting 'emblazoned' with a 'red flag' and the slogan 'We demand the Social Revolution', a racist social imperialist ex-MP of the Australian Labour Party, towards whom Oaten felt sympathetically inclined, was confronted and outstripped by an anti-militarist socialist, 'the collarless one', in a 'very old and dirty coat', who argued: 'Why should you working men fight? What's the good of saying you are fighting for Australia, when not a flower-pot in Australia belongs to you?' 'Suppose I get a rifle and shoot my fellow creatures. I ain't fighting for myself; I'm only fighting for the capitalist'.<sup>46</sup> Since similar disagreements were taking place in Britain, it would appear that Oaten, representing yet another shade of liberal imperialist opinion, was confused by the debates on the legitimacy of an inter-imperialist war.

On the surface, the students continued to remain 'loyal'. The college library acquired maps of Belgium and the North-East of France, eastern and western theatres of war, as well as 'Thacker's Military Map illustrating the War in Europe'.<sup>47</sup> The discussions in the corridors and the common room paved the way for academic debates in the seminars, and 'a great gathering in front of the War maps set up in the Common Room by Mr. Peake'.<sup>48</sup> The Eden hostel library became 'the rendezvous of all the



## Fear, Scarcity and Repression in Kolkata during the First World War

boarders since the outbreak of the great war'; it was regularly visited by those 'anxious to get the news' and 'the dailies are read, re-read, handled and re-handled a hundred times, with the result that only relics remain for curious eyes'. The secretary of the library, Anangomohan Dam, popularly known as 'Dummy', was praised in 1914 for 'doing his work satisfactorily'.<sup>49</sup> Next year, 'Dummy' was expelled from Presidency College alongside Subhash Chandra Bose and Satish Chandra Dey. The trio was identified as ringleaders of an attack by masked students on Oaten, accused of racist behaviour.<sup>50</sup> While Dam later became a Congress leader in Sylhet, Dey joined the ranks of nationalist revolutionaries.<sup>51</sup>

Students and youth were officially viewed as potentially seditious. The Eden Hostel, despite its outward and formal commitment to 'loyalty' was not spared and suspected of harbouring hostile undercurrents. A visit by the Calcutta Police on a Saturday evening in September 1914 was perceived by the boarders as 'unexpected and the invitation did not come from our side; but the function passed off very pleasantly and with, we trust, the result of an increase in mutual respect'.<sup>52</sup> Other students were neither extended nor expected the same level of pleasant interaction:

...an explosion took place at 30-1 Dixon's Lane, resulting in serious injuries to a Chittagong student, Nagendra Nath Chakrabarti, who lived there. On enquiry it transpired that the youth was injured while experimenting with materials for the preparation of bombs, remnants of which were recovered from his room. He was prosecuted under section 5 of the Explosives Act and sentenced to 4 years' rigorous imprisonment on 8 May 1916.<sup>53</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore, as the pre-eminent voice of the Bengal intelligentsia, opposed the harsh measures adopted to discipline students who were no longer willing to put up with imperial authoritarianism. In 'Chatroshason Tantra' (Student-repression System), an essay published in *Sabuj Patra* (The Green Leaf), he argued European teachers who undermined the growing sense of liberty and self-respect among their students were inviting contempt and insult from their pupils. In April 1916, 'Indian Students and Western Teachers', the translated version of

'Chatroshason Tantra', appeared in *Modern Review*, where Tagore compared the ongoing war in Europe with the conflict between 'our students and their European teachers'. He felt punishment meted out for opposing racist abuse often amounted to revenge and sent a copy of his article to Lord Carmichael, the Bengal Governor; there was no response.<sup>54</sup>

### **Wider climate of repression**

The revolutionary nationalist movement, which registered the growing involvement of a segment of the young intelligentsia, was met with extreme state repression. The political repression from above was organized through old and new legal measures enabling searches, arrests, detentions without trial and press censorship. The Vice regal declaration on 5 August 1914 that drew India into the war was immediately followed by the Indian Naval and Military (Emergency) Ordinance of 1914 which effectively muzzled the press. On 18 March 1915, without any proper discussion in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, the Defence of India Act was passed. This law vested the government with enormous repressive powers in the name of upholding security.<sup>55</sup>

Sharp rise in a 'new form of crime known as motor dacoities' to forcibly collect funds, arms and ammunitions by robbing European and Indian businesses and wealthy individuals for nationalist revolutionary activity involved *bhadralok* revolutionary youth and Sikh chauffeurs linked with the Ghadr Party during 1914-15. Assassinations and attacks on Bengali police officials engaged in counter-terrorist operations as well as constables in the streets shot up. Witnesses often refused to identify those paraded before them by the police and claimed they could not recognize the perpetrators. The state, alarmed by the 'serious outbreak' of 'political crime' in the city during 1915, came down heavily on all strands of revolutionary activity. From July 1916, the dragnet was spread over *bhadralok* revolutionaries as well as the Ghadrite and Pan-Islamic networks;<sup>56</sup> this repression was ironically labeled the 'July Revolution' by its targets<sup>57</sup> and coincided with British action earlier that year against Irish revolutionaries in Dublin during Easter. Charles Tegart, a British policeman of Irish origin, who directed the counter-terrorism operations through the Special Branch of the Calcutta Police and

the Intelligence Branch of the Bengal Police were officially praised for suppressing revolutionary activity in 1916, and legally made possible through Defence of India Act of 1915 and Regulation III of 1818. Admiration was showered on 'the tenacity with which the Special Police has fought what at one time looked like a lost cause' and 'never be forgotten by their brother officers in less adventurous branches of the service and ought to compel the admiration of all right-thinking men'.<sup>58</sup>

Arbitrary arrests as well as torture and maltreatment of prisoners generated controversy. After the Lucknow Pact of 1916 when Hindu-Muslim unity was in the air at the leadership levels of the Congress and the Muslim League, political meetings and protest rallies demanding freedom of political prisoners and civil liberties came to be regularly organized in the city.<sup>59</sup> The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* observed that people resented the presence of CID reporters at public meetings. It reminded them that they were under the constant suspicion of the authorities. Speakers ran the risk of being misreported and could get into trouble.<sup>60</sup> An extension of police powers to suppress openly rebellious members of the intelligentsia was condemned. Outside Nakhoda Mosque, the most important monument to Islamic worship, the police picked up Maulavi Imamuddin, a Pan-Islamist described by the Khilafat leader Mohammad Ali as a 'warrior of faith', in late 1916; the incident was reported and criticized by the *Iqdam*, a Pan-Islamist paper.<sup>61</sup> Criticisms were directed at the operation of the Defence of India Act by the Hindu and Muslim press for implicating and persecuting the 'innocent' who could not be accused of 'disloyalty'. The *Tarjoman* claimed Imamuddin 'had no political interests whatsoever' and his indefinite internment 'will produce a baneful influence on the public mind'. The *Hitavadi* mentioned 'the case of Debendra Nath Sarkar as illuminating the dangers with which many Bengali youths are now beset because of the activity of the political criminals'. The young man was thrice arrested within three months by the police and felt 'steps should be taken to prevent innocent men from being harassed on unfounded suspicion'. The *Tarjoman* argued:

The Hindus and the Moslems alike, collectively speaking, are free from the taint of conspiracy of sedition. It would be certainly dishonouring the people

of the Punjab and of Bengal, if we attribute the political crimes to the entire people. In other parts of India several Moslems, who cannot be suspected of disloyalty, have come under the operation of the Defence of India Act.... People are deprived of their liberties on the report of the detective police. Times without number requests have been made that at least the nature of the crime committed by these people should be made known, but these requests have not been granted.

The *Bengalee* reported: 'A distinguished University student and a poor man, also a graduate of the University, the breadwinner of his family, have recently been interned. It is a very serious matter to deprive a man of his liberty without a trial'. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* held state terror responsible for generating social anxiety: 'The application and operation of the Defence of India Act has of late been so wide and indiscriminate that it is natural that it should cause a panic in the community, for no one can feel quite secure from falling into its meshes. It is perhaps now known that it is not the Defence of India Act alone that is at work, for Regulation 111 of 1818 has also been brought into play'. The *Dainik Bharat Mitra* (The Daily Friend of India) summarized the regime of harassment and persecution embedded in the emergency policing measures directed at the alleged 'political criminal':

Now-a-days home searches and internments are the order of the day in Calcutta. Hardly a day passes when such events do not happen. Whenever the police wants to intern a man it gets out a warrant for searching his house from the Magistrate on some ground or other. Since the murder of Deputy Superintendent Basanta Kumar Chatterji the police has secured warrants for searching papers in connection with offences under section 302. When a house is searched, the police the man they suspect along with them, so that they may 'ask him something'. After that he is placed before high officials who tell him that he has been arrested under section 54, of the nature of which 99 per cent of the people are ignorant. But this does not prevent arrests being made: there ends the first chapter in the internment of an individual. After this the second

chapter begins. In Calcutta, immediately after a person is arrested, he is sent to Kyd Street or to the Police Court and sometimes to the lock-up. The police then attempt to get out information from him according to their methods, and if he does not say anything or pleads not guilty, he is sent to the Dullanda House. If this place happens to be overcrowded he is sent to the Alipore Jail. His relatives have then to wander about from place to place without success. After 10 to 14 days, when an application for bail is made, the reply is given that though he has been acquitted of the charge of murder yet he has been arrested under the Defence of India Act. Those who are wealthy supply food to their arrested relatives but those who are poor cannot do so and many arrested persons, though not declared guilty in a law-court have to subsist on jail fare. After this follows the order of internment....<sup>62</sup>

The British surveillance and policing networks, throughout the war, were accused of manufacturing suspects to justify the repression of political dissent, officially branded as 'extremism', 'sedition' and 'terror'. Court judgments upholding capital punishment were indicted as roots of political injustice. The *Dainik Basumati* (The Daily World) observed:

The enhancement by the Punjab Chief Court of the sentence of transportation for life, imposed by the Delhi Sessions Court on Basanta Kumar Biswas in the Delhi Conspiracy case, to a death sentence, seems improper to us. We are in favour of anarchists being severely punished, but still, sentences ought to be commensurate with offences.... We are of the opinion that extreme severity of punishment often produces a bad result. Specially, when the lower court thinks that death sentence would be improper, should not the higher court desist from imposing it? When man cannot give life, he ought not to take it away lightly.

The report also mentioned that though the sessions court had sentenced three persons to death for their role in the Alipore Bomb Case, an appeal in the Calcutta High Court had resulted in the reduction of the sentence to transportation for life. However,

another report described the conditions of those sentenced and 'allowed to live'. The *Bengalee* alleged Bidhu Bhushan Sarkar, an accused in the Alipore Bomb Case, and interned in the Central Provinces, was whipped for some breach of the jail regulations in 'violation of Lord Morley's orders against youthful political prisoners being whipped'.<sup>63</sup>

The treatment of political prisoners was a zone of deep acrimony between the government and its articulate *bhadralok* subjects. The *Bengalee* claimed, as early as in 1914, that it did not have the 'smallest sympathy' with political crimes 'but urged the government to distinguish between ordinary and political crimes' and appealed 'for a more humane and considerate treatment' of political prisoners. Torture and abuse of middle-class detainees became a major issue during the war. Bhupendra Kumar Datta, a nationalist revolutionary arrested and interned in 1916 wrote torture in police custody was routine and drove men to insanity and suicide. 'Sadist' methods of interrogation were considered effective in breaking the resolve of the prisoners and making them reveal secrets of the revolutionary underground. Ultimately, Lord Ronaldshay, the new Governor of Bengal who succeeded Carmichael, was forced to remove Charles Tegart, a notorious torturer; Ronaldshay also forbade physical abuse. The colonial authorities became sensitive to criticisms and campaigns on the treatment of colonial prisoners which became increasingly strident from 1917; besides, they did not wish to jeopardize the dialogue on behalf of the British Government which Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, attempted to initiate through his visit to India in 1917-18. Better treatment was offered to political prisoners in certain select jails. Inmates of the Alipur Central Jail in Kolkata were given an improved diet and the Jail Superintendent personally enquired as to their well-being everyday. Held without trial, these prisoners along with those in less privileged facilities took advantage of Montagu's visit and started a long-drawn hunger-strike from December 1917; they were soon subjected to force-feeding since the government refused to be embarrassed by such deaths or give in to their political demands.<sup>64</sup> Another revolutionary, Satis Pakrasi recalled that though openly sadistic torture had stopped due to the intervention of the Governor, psychological torture and physical abuse in the form of

sleep/food/drink deprivation, verbal insults, keeping prisoners stripped and manacled for days in an upright sitting posture were in practice during early 1918; Satis was subjected to these methods while his interrogation lasted.<sup>65</sup>

The colonizers became increasingly defensive on the condition of political prisoners. European opinion-makers felt prison reforms were needed but dismissed complaints of maltreatment as exaggerated. However, they could not fully hide the brutality and despair that often prompted 'Indian anarchist under trials' to commit suicide in holding cells and urged prompt prevention of such attempts, possibly because such incidents reinforced the allegations of abuse.<sup>66</sup>

The state and its opponents alike identified the area stretching from the university district of College Street to the city centre comprising of Chowringhee and Dalhousie, the citadel of colonial governance and colonial capital, as the chief geographic zone of 'seditious activities'. While the revolutionary groups recruited students from the College Street neighbourhood, the 'operations' against the Empire often brought their young members to the heart-land of imperial political authority and economic power. The Chowringhee-Dalhousie-Esplanade area therefore embodied the peculiar 'normalcy' of the colonial circumstance: this was where the European rulers amused themselves in the shops and cinema houses when not engaged in running the colony; clerks were beaten up by drunken soldiers; 'over-crowding' could not be avoided during the rush hours;<sup>67</sup> and young men from a *bhadralok* background, in torn clothing and dripping with blood, fled the police<sup>68</sup> or wrestled with and were arrested in full view of the crowd.<sup>69</sup>

In a letter written to a friend in London (18 September 1918) at the end of the war, Tagore articulated the paradox of liberal imperialism during a moment of extra-ordinary crisis of colonial authority and its social impact, chiefly on the *bhadralok* milieu:

The constant conflict between the growing demand of the educated community of India for a substantial share in the administration of their country and the spirit of hostility on the part of the Government has given rise among a considerable number of our young men secret

methods of violence bred of despair and distrust. This has been met by the Government by a thorough policy of repression. In Bengal itself hundreds of men are interned without trial, a great number of them in unhealthy surroundings, in jails, in solitary cells, in a few cases driving them to insanity or suicide. The misery this has caused in numerous households is deep and widespread, the greatest sufferers being the women and children who are stricken at heart and rendered helpless...I can safely say that while evidence against them is not publicly sifted by a proper tribunal giving them opportunity to defend themselves we are justified in thinking that a large number of those punished are innocent, many of whom were specially selected as victims by secret spies only because they had made themselves generously conspicuous in some noble mission of self-sacrifice. What I consider to be the worst outcome of this irresponsible policy of panic is the spread of the contagion of hatred against everything Western in minds which were free from it.<sup>70</sup>

### **Press and censorship**

Press censorship, a strategy to prevent anti-colonial and critical opinions from spreading through the multi-lingual public sphere, also indicated the limits of liberal imperialism.<sup>71</sup> The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* remarked in 1914 that the 'Contempt of Courts Bill' was only 'a brother of the Press Act of 1910'. The function of both was 'to hang like a sword of Damocles over the head of the Indian journalist'. The bill provided for imprisonment of a scribe while the act had made provisions for fining newspapers on charges of contempt as well as forfeiture of security and printing press so that they could be legally shut down. The *Musalman* objected on the grounds that the bill, tabled at a time when public demanding repeal of Press Act of 1910, would lead to the 'complete annihilation of the independence of the press' if Imperial Legislative Council amended the existing Law of Contempt.<sup>72</sup> By 1916, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* felt it was impossible for a free press and the existing India Press Act to co-exist while the



*Mohammadi* directed its sarcasm at the appointment of a Press censor:

... since the outbreak of the war, a Press censor has been appointed in this country also. All Bengali, English and Hindi newspapers are under this general department. But a separate department has been opened for our quartet of Mussalman newspapers. This may be looked on from the Government standpoint as a favour, but it is undeniable that it has, thanks to our luck provided a source of serious oppression. We know nothing at all of the lucky individual who has been selected for this work. The Government has a translator's office, a Detective Department, and in addition to them, this general Censor's office has been created ... During this short while, ... the deposit at Rs.2000, made by *Al-Hilal*, has been confiscated, and the *Mohammadi* has been harassed by being subjected to a pressing demand for Rs.1500; and the rumour is that some step has also been taken in regard to our contemporary of the *Mussalman*. Of course, the Muhammedan Censor may feel glorified at this great efficiency he has displayed ... everyone will be pleased to see his name a few days hence in the Honours List and in one of the highest posts in the service ... But we fail to understand the justification for the establishment of this post. We humbly pray to Lord Carmichael and his government to appoint the Nawabzada to some higher post like the Collectorship of Calcutta or something else, and thereby save us. Let him enjoy his reward. We shall remain under the control of the Hindu censor. We do not want any more of such favours.

The Urdu and Arabic Press, which stood for joint Hindu-Muslim campaigns against the government and acted as vehicles of Pan-Islamic ideas, faced mounting prosecution from 1915-1916.<sup>73</sup> The keeper of the Osmani Press at 10 Kasi Nath Mullick's Lane, was prosecuted in 1915 for printing a seditious Hindu leaflet and sentenced to two years' simple imprisonment. The *Al-Balagh* Press, started by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, was asked to pay security. The *Anawar-uk-Akbar* and the *Tawhit* failed to furnish the security

and stopped publication alongside the *Sampad* and the *Indian Citizen*. The Press Act was applied to seditious leaflets circulating in different parts of the city and its suburbs during the war and proscribed. Bengali books, containing 'seditious writings,' were also seized and banned.

All aspects of the public sphere and literary/cultural production were watched; this form of surveillance dated back to the Nineteenth Century and was extended to the new medium of films. 43 plays were scrutinized by the Special Branch during 1915 in search potential anti-colonial content and violation of war-time security; among these, 3 were rejected, 5 were 'passed after deletion of objectionable passages' and 35 were accepted. 'The Officers of the Detective Department' no doubt took pleasure in visiting 'all theatres and bioscopes regularly'. 7 films were prohibited during the year and in 9 films objectionable scenes were erased.<sup>74</sup>

### **Policing Kolkata**

Extraordinary powers of the police were boosted massively. In 1915, the 'Special Branch staff had to be strengthened to deal with anarchy'. Road barriers were erected, alarms set and 'patrols' by armed police motor cars were started for the first time in 'suitable areas' to deal with 'motor dacoities' carried out for political reasons. Yet, a dearth of personnel posed challenges before the maintenance of routine law and order. Traffic rules were flagrantly violated by privately owned cars and motor cabs, leading to injuries and loss of life. During 1915, rise in taxi-cab dacoities indicated the surge in the number of motor-cabs plying in the city, a novel tendency that could be noticed in the realm of civic transport from 1913-1914. Motor-cycles, lorries and some private motor-cars also made their appearance. 32 people were killed by motor vehicles in 1914 and 28 in 1915. 175 chauffeurs successfully prosecuted in 1915 and fines were collected from each for 'rash and negligent driving' at the flat rate of Rs. 15. New rules of supervision came into effect from 1 April 1915 and opposed by some taxi-drivers who struck work for a few days, 'but the trouble was speedily overcome'.<sup>75</sup>

The police administration partially admitted the extent to which the war had affected the services. In 1915, it was freely

stated that 'The Sergeants vacancies were impossible to fill owing to the war'.<sup>76</sup> Next year, 483 vacancies were noted in the ranks of constables and the police commissioner held war-induced privations to be responsible for mass resignations and non-recruitment:

The constables' vacancies are partly due to increase of force, but when taken in conjunction with the large increase in resignations it is apparent that one of the most difficult problems before the Calcutta Police is that of the recruitment of the rank and file. The resignations are almost entirely in the rank of constable and are partly due to war, which has taken a number of men for the army and for labour corps from the United Provinces and Bihar districts. This has re-acted down here and caused the constables to be sent for from their homes; but I think resignations are mainly due to the increasing difficulty, for an up-country man, of living on Rs.11 a month in Calcutta, and to the increasing supervision which is cutting down illicit gains and forcing men to live on their pay. A constable spends Rs. 10 a month nowadays in Calcutta for his food and, as a rule, has to send at least Rs. 4 a month to his family up-country, as he is not given married quarters. In the past recruits presented themselves at police head-quarters, but of late years it has become necessary to send recruiting parties to Bihar and the United Provinces, and the last party sent out in 1916, though for the first time they were empowered to give a bonus of Rs.6-8 to each recruit, failed to bring in a sufficient number of men to meet even the ordinary monthly requirements of the force. There is no solution for this difficulty except the payment of a proper wage, and this will have to be faced after the war. The new army scale of pay has benefited the sepoy to the extent of Rs. 3-8 a month-that is, he gets Rs.11 pay and free rations in kind. This will inevitable affect the Police now that the Army is again recruiting from the same class. In fact the Calcutta Police have at present before their eyes the example of the Delhi Regiment stationed at Fort

William, where constables of several years service find young recruits, their co-villagers, better paid than they are.<sup>77</sup>

The situation did not improve despite increase in pay at the end of the war since the hike was deemed inadequate to combat scarcity.<sup>78</sup> The Police administration promised to take generous care of those injured and the families of those killed by revolutionary terrorists. It seems this promise had no effect on the constabulary either.<sup>79</sup>

In Kolkata, 30.8 square miles and a population of 1,043,307 were policed during the war. The cost of maintaining the force came close to 2 million rupees. The crunch on resources at war-time meant the police administration was eager to make money from fines imposed on traffic rule violators, juvenile delinquents, prostitutes, theatres and cinema-halls, rewards for catching deserters and revolutionaries and fees earned through issuing licenses/passes for running hotels, eating houses, restaurants, bars, teashops, liquor shops, lodging houses, opium shops, ganja shops, processions and fishing.<sup>80</sup> Yet, 'owing to financial stringency due to the War' construction of police buildings suffered since funds could not be allotted.<sup>81</sup>

### **Perils of upholding the imperial order**

The war-effort triumphed but could not hide the inner tensions of a beleaguered imperial order. Imperial patriotism was manifest in the pages of European newspapers which referred to the Germans as 'Huns', supplied war news regularly and reported charitable work among soldiers, including distribution of presents by European ladies in the city.<sup>82</sup> In 1915, 'a Fire-Brigade Exhibition and Tournament' was held in aid of Lady Carmichael's 'War Relief Fund' and a handsome amount was raised. Citizens of Axis countries, described in official parlance as 'hostile aliens', were kept under watch. At the beginning of 1915, they numbered 67. Among these, 25 were repatriated by SS Golkonda in November 1915. At the close of the year, 31 remained, among whom 17 were Sisters of Mercy.<sup>83</sup> Yet even within its 'subjective' arena, imperial patriotism bred contrary reactions. Professors and policemen volunteered. Responding 'to the call of the King', L.B. Burrows of the St Paul's College, a son of the Bishop of Sheffield, and James

Watson of Scottish Churches College, joined 'Kitchener's Army'.<sup>84</sup> 29 Anglo-Indian sergeants and several British officers of the police joined up. Some never returned. A. P. Wodehouse, a Deputy Commissioner of the city police force, was killed in action at Mesopotamia in 1915. Others tried to survive the carnage by deserting and were caught. Pecuniary rewards were distributed among police personnel by the Military and Naval Authorities for the arrest of military deserters and absconding seamen. As mentioned, enlisted policemen left a vacuum in the force which police commissioners found impossible to fill up; price rise made constables resign and return to their villages; they could not be replaced by new recruits.<sup>85</sup> Some marched off to war and were greeted by news of death from home while serving at the front. An Anglo-Indian woman was allegedly murdered by her lover, while her husband was stationed at Basra.<sup>86</sup> Though Anglo-Indians were incorporated into the colonial racial hierarchy, they were consigned to the bottom rung of a social classification based on 'purity of European lineage'. In 1916, the Detective Department assisted the ordinary police in breaking up a gang of Europeans and Anglo-Indians who were 'trafficking in arms with members of the revolutionary party', indicating the limits of racial solidarity.<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusion

The wider process of militarization altered the production and reproduction of social relationships in the city. Rumours of war-time danger, restive anti-authoritarian feelings among the young, constant watch over the public sphere, large-scale arrests and socio-economic disjunctions bred anxiety and insecurity. Differential access to social power meant the overwhelming majority underwent intense hardship. Among them, the dispossessed suffered more than the propertied, the manual workers more than the white-collar workers, impoverished lower middle-classes with frozen salaries more than the upper classes, women more than men and children more than adults. The alienation and dislocation accounted for the mass anti-colonial upsurge in the immediate post-war years when the bottled-up grievances against state authoritarianism and material deprivations came to be uncorked, especially from below. The anti-imperialist tide of the late 1910s and the early 1920s confirmed that the war

had wrecked havoc on the texture of everyday life; it had violently severed Kolkata's connections with its past as the administrative and economic centre of colonial power in India from the Eighteenth Century onwards. Henceforth the city would embark on a tortuous journey as a late colonial metropolis and a provincial capital.

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- <sup>4</sup> *The Statesman* (Weekly Editions) 1917.
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- <sup>29</sup> Subodh Chandra Sengupta & Anjali Basu (eds.), *Sansad Bangali Charitabhidhan* (Dictionary of Bengali Biography), Vol.2 (Calcutta, 1996), p.133. Freud started working on trauma generated by war during this period. See Nolen Gertz, 'Blood/Lust: Freud and the Trauma of Killing in War', *Formations*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2010), pp. 65-79.
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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 1918.

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## Two 'Failed' Heroes: Understanding Modern South Asia

*Sudhir Chandra*

Last year I was invited to give the key-note address at the 21<sup>st</sup> European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies in Bonn. Because I was then engaged on what still is an unfinished study of Gandhi's last days, my first instinct was to choose to speak on him as a tragic figure in contemporary human history. But then flashed across my mind Gandhi's arch antagonist, M.A. Jinnah, and the identical fate to which both India and Pakistan can be said to have consigned the great leaders whom they to date revere as 'Father of the Nation'. Despite feeling comparatively less confident with regard to Jinnah, I decided to include him as well. Hence 'Two 'Failed' Heroes', not just one.

In the course of preparing my lecture, I needed to turn, not surprisingly, to Mubarak Ali for information and advice. He has, however, not seen the text, and he may even disagree with it. Yet, there is in the text a spirit of critical historical inquiry that he will approve of. That is the spirit that has informed his own writing. And he has maintained that spirit in circumstances more adverse than the ones – gathering clouds notwithstanding – in which scholars function across the border in India. It is a privilege, therefore, to offer the text of the lecture for inclusion in a festschrift for Mubarak Ali.

What  
does  
this  
mean?

### I

Fellow Scholar-Friends,

I appear before you with unreserved humility, aware as I am of my inadequacy for the task assigned to me. Still I have accepted, with gratitude, the invitation so kindly extended by the organizers of this illustrious Conference. One reason, I won't lie to you, is my failure to rise above normal egoism. But there is another reason as well. It lies in a feeling that what I have to say about two 'failed' – I want to say 'discarded' – heroes will have some bearing on our

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attempts to understand contemporary South Asia. The two heroes are Gandhi and Jinnah. What I say is based on an ongoing study which at the moment is very uneven. I have done comparatively more work on Gandhi, and the comparison with Jinnah needs greater study and reflection. But it will help to be scrutinized by peers assembled here.

I shall, for most of the forty-five minutes allotted to me, try and convey a sense of what Gandhi felt about his life and mission during his last, lonely, tragic, and sublime days; and of how he chose between action and non-action during those difficult days. I shall then move very briefly on to the last tragic days of Jinnah who, too, like Gandhi, but through a radically different modality, wished to usher in a new society and state. Finally, coming to our own day, I shall refer to certain developments that culminated in the ongoing tragedy named Gujarat 2002.

The entire narrative may resonate with something tragic and recalcitrant about human predicament. Of that I will not speak overly explicitly.

## II

So, Gandhi then,

'Yes, I was once a big man in India'. This is how Gandhi assessed himself on the eve of his country's independence. The once-big man found himself sidelined and disenchanted. He felt he was now more a nuisance than the inspiring presence he had been for close to three decades. He lost his famous wish to live and be of service for a hundred and twenty-five years, and started praying for death. Speaking on 2 October 1947, his sole birthday in independent India during his life-time, he said:

This is a day for me to mourn. I am surprised, indeed ashamed, that I am still alive. I am the same person whom crores of people obeyed the moment he asked for something to be done. No one listens to me today. I say, 'do this', and they answer back, 'no, we won't'.... the desire to live for 125 years has left me.... I am entering 79 today and even that pricks me.

What anguished Gandhi? The answer is summed in a question he posed months before Independence: 'Whatever is happening in the country today that could make me happy?' He

shuddered, he said, to visualise the future. What troubled him the most was, his discovery of his life's lie. He had come to India in 1915, following the historic success of his ahimsa – non-violence – in South Africa. His plan was to try that experiment in India. This was met with unconcealed ridicule and skepticism. Disarming that, he had during the following three decades managed to lead what was – and still is – believed to have been a unique non-violent struggle.

Then, in the hour of Independence, Gandhi was disabused. The country was gripped by communal frenzy. How could three decades of non-violent Satyagraha have ended in such violence? The question brought Gandhi a discovery. There never had been such a satyagraha. He had all along laboured under a great delusion. He confessed a month before Independence:

Ahimsa never goes along with the weak. It [the non-violence of the weak] should, therefore, be called not ahimsa but passive resistance.... Passive resistance is a preparation for active armed resistance. The result is that the violence that had filled people's hearts has abruptly come out.

The repressed had resurfaced. And it was the violence of the weak. Should there at all be violence, Gandhi would rather have the violence of the brave. Instead, he lamented: 'We have become such rogues that we have started fearing one another'.

Informed scholars may dispute Gandhi's claim. They may argue that the Congress had right in the beginning rejected Gandhi's proposal to adopt non-violence as its creed, and maintained that position throughout. Yet, Gandhi's lament has truth in it. As early as 1920, the Congress had 'adopted' the policy of 'progressive non-violent non-co-operation'. It had defined its 'creed' as 'the attainment of *Swarajya* [self-rule] by all legitimate and peaceful means'. The phraseology was sufficiently equivocal to allow the Congress and its allies to use non-violence instrumentally without feeling morally constrained by it, and yet claim a unique moral superiority for the Indian freedom struggle. That myth of uniqueness continues to inform not just popular remembrance but also the nationalist historiography of modern India.

Gandhi, however, wondered why he failed to see this. 'How could I persuade myself', he asked, 'that ahimsa could be a

weapon of cowards?' The explanation he got was: 'When God needs someone to get a particular work done, He renders him foolish. I remained blind all these years'. As one who danced to the divine tune, and treasured that 'delusion', if it was one, Gandhi was satisfied with the explanation.

Many of us will find it laughable. But can some of us not also ask why that explanation should be inapproachable for us? Be that as it may, we cannot ignore the Gandhian insight that the struggle he led was *not* non-violent. If his distinction between principled and pragmatic non-violence makes sense – as, indeed, it does both theoretically and empirically – then we must accept that human history has not known the application of non-violence on a large scale. Neither academic nor popular opinion seems to accept that. Leaving popular opinion aside, academic opinion must consider whether it has not erred in believing the struggles led by Gandhi and, following him, by the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela to have been non-violent. And whether it has not persisted in that error – the error of mistaking apparent for real non-violence – to ward off the news that humans can do no better in their present state of evolution.

Examination of Gandhi must also be self-examination.

As an aside I may recall a common saying that I grew up hearing in the 1950s and 1960s. '*Majboori ka naam Mahatma Gandhi*' – 'Helplessness, that is Mahatma Gandhi', it said. The phrase has gone out of circulation. But, then, nor does *majboori* – helplessness – lead these days so routinely to non-violence.

The distinction between principled and pragmatic non-violence was for Gandhi critical. He said: 'Ahimsa is my dharma.... It is eternal. It can never change.... The Congress accepted ahimsa only as a matter of policy'. The distinction, Gandhi accepted, gave the Congress 'the right to change a policy which it no longer requires'. But it reinforced his commitment to his dharma. Having discovered that the spurious non-violence of the freedom struggle was the real tragedy of which the other ominous developments were but effects, he redoubled his efforts to demonstrate the efficacy and practicability of non-violence in the public domain.

### III

Even as he prayed for early death, what did Gandhi do in the face of thickening tragedy? Assuming that non-action also is action, I

shall attempt an answer by discussing two instances of Gandhi's non-action before turning to two instances of what one can describe as extreme action, extreme in that he put his very life at stake.

The first instance of non-action occurred, if I may say so, when he was still enthusiastic about living a hundred and twenty-five years. At stake was the vision that he had formulated in his seed-text, the Hind Swaraj. Since its formulation in 1909, he had waited for a chance to translate that vision into action. He sensed the chance towards the end of 1945, when freedom was round the corner and his political heir, Jawaharlal Nehru, was set to head the government in free India.

*Gandhi's letter to Nehru*  
Gandhi sent a long letter to Nehru, outlining the India of his dreams which, he stated, corresponded to his Hind Swaraj vision. Speaking – it may be noted – as 'an average modern', Nehru peremptorily rejected Gandhi's dream. Rather like Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor telling off Christ in The Brothers Karamazov, Nehru even told Gandhi that in the intervening years he – Gandhi – had, very sensibly, moved away from his Hind Swaraj position. The country, Gandhi saw, was not with his vision, but with the Nehruvian rejection of it. He dropped the matter forthwith.

A similar situation arose a year and a half later. The fractious issue of India's partition was being finally settled. Promptly Gandhi issued a statement that is still remembered, as much in his favour as against him, and used for diametrically opposite inferences. Partition, he famously warned, would take place over his dead body. The Partition took place, and the man of Truth lived on.

Many in India felt betrayed. They still do. Because Gandhi did not undertake a fast unto death to prevent the Partition, he was accused, and still is, of having brought it about. This highlights a fundamental cleavage between Gandhi's concerns and the concerns of those feeling betrayed. Believing the limits of India to be sacrosanct rather than contingent, the betrayed necessarily valorized, as they still do, nationalism vis-à-vis communalism. Pakistan, for them, is the unfortunate culmination of Muslim communalism, not the fruition of a rival nationalism. Even the best Indian scholarship must first think of Partition as a tragedy.

*Indian scholarship thinks of Partition as a tragedy because of the side effect of Pakistan is equally dismal.*

Gandhi was differently concerned. True, he could not celebrate Pakistan. But once it had been accepted, and he could realize the futility of opposing it, he wanted the acceptance to be hearty and unscarred by the hostility that had produced Pakistan. Personally, and that is where his acceptance of Partition was also a negation of it, he felt equally for people, no matter which side of the new political divide they chose or were forced to live in.

'Is this division made to become friends? Or to become enemies', he asked. And added to the eloquent question the sage advice: 'One who is an enemy to Pakistan is, undoubtedly, also India's enemy'. 'I wish', he said, 'to assail the intelligence of you all, the Congress, the Muslims, and Jinnah Saheb, and take possession of their hearts'.

Those, like our own, were self-assured hearts. Not one among them suspected that Gandhi was saving his life to discharge an awesome responsibility that would lead him to risk that very life twice within the next eight months.

And then his prayer for death would be answered.

That responsibility was to counter the Partition's insane aftermath.

Gandhi was convinced that Partition would not succeed without offering the minorities in India and Pakistan dignity, security and equality. He opposed wholesale transfer of populations, and even after large-scale cross-border migrations had occurred, he kept pleading for conditions that would facilitate the resettlement of the migrants in their original homes.

He was happy that Jinnah had promised the minorities in Pakistan complete non-discrimination. Welcome as that was, India's duty to its minorities was independent of what happened in Pakistan. Having rejected the two-nation theory, India must demonstrate the sincerity of that rejection and so treat her minorities as to be an incentive and a model for Pakistan. 'Supposing', Gandhi reasoned, 'that there is a wave of self-purification throughout India, Pakistan will become *pak* [pure]. It will be a state in which the past wrongs will have been forgotten, the past distinctions will have been buried'.

This for Gandhi was the most urgent task. Defying old age and indifferent health, he spent the last fifteen months of his life, rushing from one trouble spot to another, pleading with people,

and with those in power, appealing to their reason and humanity, and all the while feeling his moral authority wane. Like a losing gambler, he started increasing the stakes, until nothing short of staking his life seemed to work, if even that truly did.

In the week preceding Independence Gandhi decided to leave Delhi for Noakhali. But he was detained in Calcutta to save it from communal violence. That worked. Within twenty-four hours, 'it seemed as if there never had been bad blood between the Hindus and the Muslims'. Gandhi was uncertain whether this was a miracle or an accident. The answer came a fortnight later when, as he lay sleeping, an irate gang of Hindu youths attacked the house he was staying in. The following day Calcutta was re-seized by anti-Muslim violence.

Gandhi needed to act decisively and fast. Failure to bring peace to Calcutta would have adverse consequences elsewhere. With what face, then, would he visit Punjab, especially West Punjab in Pakistan, and plead for peace there? That very evening Gandhi was on a fast unto death. The effect, once again, was instantaneous. At least on the surface. Peace returned after Gandhi had starved for a mere seventy-three hours. He was ready to leave for Punjab the following day. But leaders in Calcutta prevailed upon him to stay on for an extra couple of days so as to consolidate peace in the city.

Gandhi reached Delhi, on his way to Punjab, and found the city overtaken by communal violence. Like Calcutta till five days ago, it was now Delhi that Gandhi needed to bring back to sanity as a necessary condition for sanity elsewhere. He struggled to reach out to people's residual humanity. Speaking as one who knew no 'other', he said in the midst of blinding fear, rage and thirst for revenge:

With me all are one. With me it's not that this Gandhi is a Hindu and as such will only look after the Hindus, and not the Muslims. I am, I say, a Hindu, a true Hindu, a *sanatani* Hindu. Therefore I am also a Musalman, a Parsi, a Christian, and also a Jew. For me they are all branches of a single tree. So which branch do I hold on to and which one do I leave? Which leaves do I pick and which ones do I leave?... If everyone became like me, there would be complete peace.



## Two 'Failed' Heroes: Understanding Modern South Asia

Unlike the others who knew why what was happening was happening, Gandhi confessed: 'Why they [Hindus and Muslims] are fighting, nobody knows. At least I don't'. But he knew a way – perhaps the only way – to break the cycle of violence. 'Both Hindus and Musalmans', he said, 'have become animals.... That one of them stops being animal is the only way out'.

For four months he was not heard. Then, on 12 January, out of the blue, he began his prayer discourse thus:

People fast to better their health, under rules governing health. Fast is also observed by way of penance when one has done some wrong and realised one's error. To observe these fasts no faith in ahimsa is required. But occasions arise when a votary of ahimsa feels compelled to fast to protest against an injustice done by the society. He does that only when no other option remains available to him. Such an occasion has come for me.

He would go on a fast unto death the following day, and break it when the hearts of the different communities were again one.

The fast, Gandhi specified, was for the Muslims of India. The Hindus and the Sikhs would need to decide how they would treat the Muslim minority. The fast was also for the minorities in Pakistan. Considering what he was doing for the Muslims in India, Muslims in Pakistan 'must purify their hearts and pledge themselves that they will not rest till the Hindus and Sikhs can return and live in safety in Pakistan'.

The Delhi fast lasted two days longer than the one in Calcutta. It was broken after more than a hundred representatives of various communities and political organizations issued a statement declaring their 'heart-felt desire that the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and members of other communities should once again live in Delhi like brothers'. They pledged 'to protect the life, property and faith of Muslims', and assured that communal violence would not recur in Delhi. They assured that the Muslims would get back the mosques which the Hindus and Sikhs had occupied, and there would be no objection to the return of those Muslim migrants who wished to come back to Delhi. And, although frantic behind-the-scene official activity had expedited this happy

resolution, the hundred odd signatories promised that all this would be done by voluntary public effort without the help of the police or the military.

Two days later an attempt was made to kill Gandhi. He was got rid of, finally, ten days later.

*Suhrawardy* We may recall, in the context of Gandhi's killing, a piece of conversation immediately after the termination of Gandhi's Calcutta fast. An overwhelmed Suhrawardy, the foe-turned-accomplice, said to Gandhi: '... at one time, Muslims looked upon you as their arch enemy. But now their hearts have been so touched by the services you have rendered them that today they acclaim you as their friend and helper'. Rajagopalachari interjected to complete Suhrawardy's remark: 'If I may vary the language, I would say that he [Gandhi] is safer today in the hands of Muslims than those of Hindus'.

Rajagopalachari, most likely, did not quite have a presentiment of what he was saying. Even today, thinking of the gloom that followed Gandhi's killing, and fearing what it says of human nature, we may dismiss as fortuitous the coming of that killing within five months of Rajagopalachari's interjection. I will not press the connection either. My purpose is not to establish Gandhi's prophethood and cite it as yet another illustration of peoples' fraught relationship with their prophets. I wish, rather, to highlight the question of the possibility or otherwise of non-violence; and to suggest that the phase when Gandhi was pitted against his own people is particularly germane for examining that question.

Gandhi struggled for thirty-two years against the colonial masters. He was permitted only twenty-two weeks of struggle in independent India. He was rushing during that period from one trouble spot to another. Everywhere, in varying measure, he was able to restore peace. But it was localised peace. Belying Gandhi's expectation, his success in one place had not prevented violence elsewhere. More than his message and method, it was his physical presence that people had willy-nilly bowed to. It was a far cry from the miracles his calls had produced in days gone by. Further, in staking his life Gandhi had hoped to effect what he called heart-change and saw as the sole foundation for lasting peace. What he achieved was cessation of violence by people not ready to see him

starve or have his death upon their heads. Was it not the beginning of the end?

Gandhi did not see the moral coercion behind his fasts. Maybe his God had visited blindness upon him. That coercion is best evidenced by a dispute that preceded the termination of his Calcutta fast. When a deputation of leading public figures, bringing news of peace, requested Gandhi to break his fast, he asked them for a written assurance that peace had followed a genuine change of hearts, and that communal madness would not recur in Calcutta. Further, Gandhi asked the Hindus among the deputationists for their written 'word of honour' that, should communal violence recur in the city, they 'would die in the attempt to put out the conflagration but not return alive to report failure'.

The deputationists tried to haggle with Gandhi that the guarantee he now demanded did not figure among the conditions he had laid down for the termination of his fast. Failing with their wits, they reluctantly, submitted to Gandhi. Neither the Calcutta nor the Delhi pledges that Gandhi's fasts unto death elicited were the kind of genuine and voluntary pledges that could have ensured forgiveness, peace and harmony.

This story also points to a connection between mundane interests and moral authority. Interests sustain moral authority and also corrode it. They colour people's responses not obtrusively, as part of a conscious design, but subtly, almost unbeknown to those responding. While it grew finer with time, the moral quality of Gandhi's being was a constant throughout. But the authority he could exercise kept fluctuating. Those fluctuations were connected with the interests, real or imagined, of those responding to him. Thus, precisely when, shedding their long-standing suspicion of Gandhi, the Muslims began recognizing his moral grandeur, more and more Hindus across the board, not just unabashed communalists among them, tended to find him a nuisance, a cross they felt increasingly loath to bear.

There was something unique about Gandhi's discharge of his awesome responsibility. When raging violence made those in authority, as also the commoners, instinctively turn to the police and the military to restore peace, Gandhi dismissed that as the peace of the grave, or 'peace of the cowardly'. He turned, instead, to restoring sanity among people gone mad. His mode of dealing

with the immediate present had at its centre the longer term and the larger perspective. Yet, ironically, what he did was, typically for his day and today, seen by Nehru as 'going round with ointment trying to heal one sore spot after another on the body of India'. Nehru's prescription, again typically for his day and our own, was rather to diagnose 'the cause of this eruption of sores' and treat 'the body as a whole'.

This happened, intriguingly enough, despite Gandhi's success where the State's arms had failed. Even as the same Nehru, the head of the Government, was frantically wanting Gandhi to try his magic in the Punjab; and Mountbatten, the Governor-General, was publicly admitting: 'In the Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting'. This happened, oblivious to the fact that if Gandhi could, even transiently, make people nobler and taller than they were, or would ever be, he had achieved more than would any diagnosis of causes and treatment of the body as a whole. And this happened without ascertaining whether the supposed diagnoses and prognoses were really at hand.

The old faith in systemic change persists, while Gandhi's kind of healing continues to be viewed as tinkering with individuals, not as a radical attempt to humanise our psyche. Take it or leave it, Gandhi's conviction was: 'The society comprises us all. It does not make us. We make it'. *Yatha pinde tatha brahmande* – as the atom so the universe – he would recall the old adage, and back it up with his own *sutra*: 'What is right for me is right for everyone'.

Gandhi was not innocent of the system-individual causality. His *Hind Swaraj* was inspired precisely by that causality. Modern industrial civilization, he would say, was not conducive to non-violence. Yet, he could not underestimate the small voice within. Whatever the system, he would say: 'Let everyone examine themselves'.

#### IV

This brings me to Jinnah. I cannot make my point better than by quoting a highly charged single-sentence statement about him: 'The last sound will never echo the first'. Written in 1943 by a disenchanted admirer, Joachim Alyn, this powerful piece of

abstraction not only sums up the tectonic shift in Jinnah's politics that transformed the political geography of South Asia, but also the acute sense of betrayal that many of his erstwhile admirers felt because of that shift. Jinnah belied Alva's prediction within four years. His last sound was, arguably, an echo of the first. In the very moment of the creation of Pakistan on the basis that Hindus and Muslims constituted two separate nations, Jinnah envisioned a citizenry in which Muslims would cease to be Muslim and Hindus would cease to be Hindu. Addressing all his people – not just the Muslims – he said that the only way to make 'the great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous' was to forget the past and bury the hatchet. Indeed, he wanted them to create a new past, replacing the one that had made possible the present they were celebrating. Jinnah said in his famous – and for many forgettable – address as President of the Pakistani Constituent Assembly:

If you change your past and work together in a spirit that every one of you, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make.... We should begin the work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community ... will vanish.

*Jinnah envisioned a secular Pakistan*

This was not a one-off pronouncement. Ever since the formal acceptance of the Pakistan Resolution in 1940, Jinnah had conceived of a secular, not a theocratic, Pakistan. However, a narrow and exclusivist interpretation of the two-nation theory has so possessed its supporters as well as opponents that both have, from their opposite vantage points, continued to accuse Jinnah of having attempted to square a circle. It should not, though, be difficult to see that there was no logical inconsistency between his espousal of the two-nation theory and his conception of a secular democratic Pakistan. In fact, Jinnah's Constituent Assembly peroration explains this rather effectively.

This is an intriguing tale. And it is a tale-in-the-making. Besides being made in its diametrically opposed popular as well as academic readings, it is also being scripted in the chequered and uncertain unfolding of contemporary Pakistani politics.

My interest in this tale, at the moment, is by way of comparison with Gandhi's story over the same period in time. Seen in terms of what Gandhi, the Rashtrapita, and Jinnah, the Baba-e-Qaum – both titles meaning Father of the Nation – can reasonably be shown to have wanted their countries to be, the two great leaders appear to have failed. But any verdict of failure, or success, about figures embodying historical forces can only be provisional. I am not suggesting finality. I, rather, want modern South Asian history to take a turn that converts both Gandhi and Jinnah into successes, even though I may not expect that to transpire soon.

For all their differences about what could be done to achieve the desired end, and about what end could be desired, both Gandhi and Jinnah were consummate gamblers. They could play for high stakes, which necessarily involved extraordinary risks, and they knew when to do that. Similarly, their comrades and followers, too, displayed an uncanny similarity with regard to their readiness to be enthused by the leader. That readiness was a function of, and varied temporally in response to, a fluid and amorphous mix of idealism and material interests. Beyond those limits, the comrades and the followers would rather lead, or discard, the leader.

The two leaders, ironically, were defeated in the moment of their most glorious risks. However, the 'failed' Jinnah is today a powerful symbol for the struggling secular democratic forces in Pakistan to rally around. Gandhi will need a longer wait, in India, and also in the world, notwithstanding the mushrooming of Gandhian movements all over.

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## V

Nothing reflects more sadly Gandhi's growing failure in India than a sea change in an increasingly large number of Indians' ways of seeing inter-community relations. The seemingly sudden eruption of Hindu violence against the Sikhs in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, and 'Gujarat 2002' symptomatise that change. As do the forced exile of the Hindus from Kashmir, the wave of violence against the country's Christians, and the sad plight of the ethnic peoples in the North East. The list is not exhaustive; it keeps proliferating; and

the best informed know that even they do not know the whole of this mounting brutalisation.

Gandhi had during the Partition frenzy asked if, in the event of wholesale demographic exchange of minorities, venerable places like the Jama Masjid and Nankana Sahib would be destroyed. 'No' had been his categorical answer to the hypothetical question. Even in the midst of that frenzy his was not a lone, atypical answer. A mere forty-five years after his killing – so complete now the killing is – his country literally actualized the inconceivable. It destroyed the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, and sealed the destruction with a vandalic vote that enthroned the guilty, first in Uttar Pradesh and then at the Centre.

No transient rash of collective passion, these developments have altered the country's political spectrum. What was once considered an ugly aberration now constitutes the country's political centre.

Gujarat 2002 has been a leap towards actualizing and normalising the inconceivable. Violence against a marked community was carried out under State patronage. Immediately following that carnivalesque violence, in a legitimising celebration, Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister, was given a thunderous electoral mandate. Modi is but a symptom. He has since been self-righteously unrepentant, and the mandate given him has been renewed. That the renewal has come in the name of development, ostensibly exorcising the memory of 2002, is an index of the normalisation of the erstwhile inconceivable.

Gujarat is but the aggravation of a wider phenomenon. That it is among the most prosperous and fastest developing States in India is especially relevant in the context of continuing faith in systemic change. It is an article of that faith that social tensions must diminish in the wake of economic prosperity and educational advancement. Believed to be independent and necessary, that correlation has, however, shown itself to be neither. It has even tended to operate inversely, precipitating the Gujarat kind of brutalization and facilitating its normalization.

Gandhi's talismanic introspection – 'Let everyone examine themselves' – may help understand that wider phenomenon better. It may even point towards a more self-reflexive – and consequently self-implicating – scholarship. I am speaking in Bonn, the capital of

that Germany which had the sense and the courage to essay the *Historikerstreit* and debate the meaning of the Nazi Reign for German history and culture. It is but apt that I should, here, endeavour to peep into the ever-fluid paradoxical potential that constitutes the human interior, and influences, even as it is influenced by, larger developments outside in ways that often escape scrutiny.

I shall, as matter-of-factly as I can, talk about two sets of contrasting personal responses.

I was visiting a relief camp for the victims of the 1992-93 anti-Muslim Hindutva savagery in Surat. Suddenly a middle-aged woman appeared before me. By her side was a young girl, not more than fourteen. The woman was shouting hoarsely: 'They raped this child! Yes, they did. They raped this little child, brother!' The 'they' she was cursing helplessly were men, and Hindus. So was I. Ashamed, guilty, angry, paralyzed, I. wanted to run away and cry.

Within days of it came the other experience. I was sitting at a friend's house when a woman neighbour of his rushed in. A train, she abruptly announced, had been forcibly stopped near Surat and some women passengers had been raped. That done, she rushed out. I heard my friend say that this must be a false rumour, and caught myself thinking lest those were Hindu women. In the same moment came guilt. But the terrifying thought had occurred. It had occurred after years of confident self-fashioning and intimate interaction with Muslims, including a year of living with a gracious Muslim couple to whom I was like a son. Confronted that day with my twin identity as a man and a Hindu, could I have suspected the presence within me of this other Hindu, the kind that can lead to the Hindutva I hate? Can there be any guarantee now that I have been purged of that hateful presence? Can we know the sense in which we are what we are?

The first of the other set of contrasting responses relates to 1990, the year of widespread anti-Muslim violence following the first assault on the Babri Masjid. I was returning from Aligarh which had been gripped by that violence. My train had barely left the station when it came to a sudden halt. That sent me into panic. I was reminded of a recent incident in which a train had been stopped and its Muslim passengers attacked. A whole scenario



1 my  
flashed through my mind. My first impulse was that if the miscreants mistook me for a Muslim because of my appearance, I should tell them I was a Hindu. But soon I was resolved not to disabuse them. Although it remained untested, my readiness for martyrdom really pleased me.

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1 my  
A mere two years later, I was sitting in my study in Surat when our office superintendent called to enquire if I was going on a journey that day. There just had been a bomb blast in the city, and renewed violence was apprehended. He advised me to postpone my journey, or else leave immediately for the station. As I was getting ready to leave, fear of running into a violent mob gripped me. This time love of life prevailed. Given that I cannot, because of my circumcision, clear the pants-down test usually administered during communal violence, I decided to carry my passport that afternoon.

You can imagine the ignominy of that capitulation. I have since managed to guard myself against similar ignominy. Even during the Gujarat 2002 violence I moved about freely, though not without fear, in the worst affected areas. But the memory of that capitulation still hurts and scares. I should like to hope that it stays as a warning, not as a weakness.

If these fragments constitute some sort of social science evidence – and this is not a simple solipsistic claim – what an infinite reservoir of contradictory impulses, with their ever changing chemistry, must always be at work! How much does this fluid reservoir determine when a Gandhi or a Jinnah will succeed and when they will fail? When does it prop them up? When does it submerge them? Great charismatic figures apart, what freedom do ordinary human beings like me exercise? How much of the introspection mandated by Gandhi is effectively available to them? And what about the freedom to act, in accordance with the dictates of that introspection? Relevant as these questions are, they do not admit of standard answers. They do, though, indicate the indeterminacy of human intervention.

Gandhi's life is illustrative of that indeterminacy. Refusing to be constrained by received limits of the possible, he demonstrated the possibility of transcending them. The selfsame limits defeated him time and again. But that did not upset his notion of the possible. Towards the very end, characteristically, he

said: 'I may have gone bankrupt, but ahimsa can never be bankrupt'.

Such faith may be beyond average moderns. Not so what the Dalai Lama recently said in reply to a question whether non-violence was possible in the face of the kind of terrorism that has overtaken the present-day world. After going into a lengthy discussion of what possibly causes and sustains such violence, the Dalai Lama answered the question in the affirmative. But his 'yes' was preceded by a long-drawn-out 'maybe', the like of which I had not heard before. Its feeble interminable intonation sounded like the 'maybe' was seeking to defer, indefinitely, the affirmation of non-violence.

In any case, learning to suspect its own notions of the possible, self-reflexive scholarship must realize that the game is still on. At stake is the impossible possibility of Gandhi. And not just for South Asia.

*The United  
States of India:  
a confederacy of  
communities  
or the  
Great Hindu Confederacy*

# **Making Historical Sense of Community?: Reflections on Developments in South Asia, Pakistan and Sindh**

***Sarah Ansari***

The aim of this contribution is to explore, and offer some personal observations on, factors involved in the way that the concept of the 'community' has evolved as far as Muslims who were once part of British-ruled India and who subsequently became citizens of Pakistan and its various provinces are concerned. My reflections here draw inspiration from Professor Mubarak Ali's long-standing argument that History as a discipline cannot afford to be neither one-dimensional nor over-simplistic, and that its study hinges on identifying and debating competing, often uncomfortable, explanations of the past. As a novice historian in the 1980s, negotiating what was for me the very new and exciting world of South Asian history in general and that of Sindh more specifically, I learned quickly to value his wise counsel. Without the kind interest that he took in my doctoral project, and the practical advice that he provided during my efforts to track down material on Pirs in Sindh under the British, I am certain that I could not have achieved my goal.<sup>1</sup>

It is now widely recognised that a major problem for many newly-independent states in the aftermath of decolonisation in the middle decades of the twentieth century was how to define and then sustain their newly-won national identity, or at least a common identity on which enough of the people living in them could agree. Often the nationalist sentiment that had drawn together different groups in the struggle for independence did not prove able to cement these interests together in the longer run. With the attainment of political freedom, differences between groups re-emerged, accentuated by struggles to secure favourable positions within the parameters of the new state. Pre-existing ties – whether tribal, ethnic, or religious – that were often overlooked or at least relegated to positions of lesser importance during the crucial transitional phase straddling independence, came to challenge ideas which the state and its new rulers had about where people's political loyalties now ought to lie. Where the authority of the state was weak, where

consensus on what constitutes the basis of political community within it was fragile, and where popular expectations were high, these tendencies combined to generate frustration and political instability.

This scenario is a familiar story, repeated many times in different parts of the post-colonial world, and Pakistan's experience since 1947 illustrates it well. Indeed, much work largely focused at the all-Pakistan level has been carried out to explore and explain the new state's failure to deal with this challenge successfully - particularly in relation to the problems which led to East Pakistan's eventual secession. My own research has engaged with this problem in a less well-studied part of not just Pakistan but the subcontinent as a whole, that is the province of Sindh. While seeming rather peripheral to the main struggle between East and West Pakistan that dominated the country's first 25 years, its experiences have confirmed the existence of deep structural difficulties faced by the new state, and indicate the extent of the challenge which have faced Pakistan's effective survival since its earliest years.

The concept of the 'community' has come to be one of the most compelling and attractive themes in modern social science, partly because of the elusiveness of its definition. As early as the mid-1950s, more than ninety discrete definitions were in circulation for use which, apart from anything else, suggests that the idea of 'community' has long exerted a strong hold over both the intellectual and the popular mind. Put simply, however, the term 'community' has been used to refer to something as basic as people having something in common. This shared element is often understood geographically, that is in terms of territory or place. In contrast to this sense of community as 'shared residence', is a second meaning where the basis of community - 'interest community' - is shared characteristics other than place, in which people are linked by factors such as common ethnic origin, religion, occupation, and so on. There is always a strong possibility of these two coinciding but distinguishing between them allows for recognition that interest groups may be geographically dispersed. A third sense of community - 'community of attachment' - involves interaction with other people and a shared sense of identity.<sup>3</sup> All three kinds of community have the potential to act as political frameworks for their members, defining and creating the boundaries for political activities. In other

words, they represent the shared bases on which political communities are founded, develop and expand.

As is well-known, the concept of the 'community' in South Asia at the time of independence in 1947 was identified above all with the subcontinent's various religious identities. The main dividing line between 'communities' by then had come to be seen as the one which apparently separated Hindus and Muslims although other smaller religious communities had 'emerged' and were identified as such during the British period. Certainly, many other communities did exist alongside the religious ones in undivided India, clustered around other kinds of shared identity or common interest, but - rightly or wrongly - the label of 'community' was not on the whole applied to them at the time. So, as far as the notion of 'community' in the subcontinent was concerned, it is possible to argue that they were not really territorial or place communities, and while by definition they tended to be interest communities, only sometimes did they show the signs of being communities of attachment.

Determining and explaining the extent of the role played by so-called communities in the politics of the last decades of the British Raj has occupied a wide range of historians who have approached the issue from many different angles. Consensus, however, exists over the fact that with the sharpening of religious identities from the nineteenth century onwards there was a increasing and undeniable tendency for communities of one sort or another to clash with each other, this trend continuing into the period following on from the ending of empire. And so at the heart of the 'problem' which surrounds how to approach the term 'community' in the South Asian context in general, and the question of the so-called 'Indian Muslim community' more specifically, is the fact that it has come to be so closely associated with the whole question of the far less benign phenomenon of 'communalism'.

Communalism over the course of the first half of the twentieth century was a process identified first and foremost with British India. This was reflected in the changing definitions offered for it. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, in its 1933 edition, defined 'communalism' in very general terms (the principle of the communal organisation of society ...), but by the 1950s incorporated a rather different version: 'of or pertaining to a (or the) community,

especially, in India, of any racial [sic] or religious communities'. In other words, 'communal' was re-invented during this period as an adjective derived not from community but from tension between religious communities, particularly those in the subcontinent.

For many commentators, the appearance of 'communities' onto the Indian scene thus signaled, and explains, the beginning of the drift into 'communalism'. But it was in fact only in the last stages of the nineteenth century that the description 'community' began to be applied at all widely in the Indian context. Up to that point, colonial writers in particularly apparently regularly used other kinds of terms, such as 'race', 'nation', 'nationality' and 'class', in their efforts to distinguish the people whom they sought to classify. When 'community' was introduced and adopted as an alternative to these terms, its blandness was one of its main attractions - 'race' for instance had become too biologically associated, while 'nation' had been largely appropriated for the more or less exclusive use of the new nation-states of Europe. And this colonial vocabulary has continued to influence markedly the political language of South Asia as reflected in the fact that it is still difficult to apply the term 'community' to non-religious groups - in the Pakistani case, 'ethnic' has very often become a useful substitute or way of avoiding the dilemma of whether or not to use the description in the first place.

With the rise of nationalist sentiment, alongside the fact that the atmosphere of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century encouraged belief and confidence in the naturalness of 'nation-ness' or nationalism, communal identities, as the opposite and chief adversary of a united, national identity, came to be seen as un-natural, constructed, artificial, and so on. Not surprisingly, many historians, both before and since 1947, have tended to reject the appearance of 'communities' on the political scene as something that was equally constructed, un-natural, blaming British colonial rule for the negative direction thus taken by Indian politics. Whether it was deliberately intended or an inevitable consequence of the way that Britain ruled India, whether or not nationalists themselves did a lot to propagate the use of the concept, the 'communalisation' of Indian political life was the result.

Not surprisingly, therefore, much writing about the history of the late colonial period has been carried out by historians who, in a similar vein to Professor Mubarak Ali, have rejected the

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'communalisation' of South Asian political life as an artificial construction, and unwanted consequence, of the imperial age. To supporters of the argument that 'communalism' was not a 'natural' feature of Indian life, views of the 'community' as a socio-political phenomenon that did not necessarily emerge automatically but came about through a process of generating and sustaining people's sense of belonging through particular symbols, have been important. But placing emphasis on the artificial construction of 'community' has not been restricted to historians of South Asia. In a similar fashion to their rejection of 'community' as a backward-looking institution, many western intellectuals have claimed that modernity and community were irreconcilable, that the characteristic features of community could not survive industrialisation and urbanisation, and that communities were simply out-of-tune with the rhythms of modern life. On the other hand, there has also been within such academic circles strong support for recognising the active involvement of individuals and groups in the construction of communities because of the widespread superficial attraction to the idea of a 'natural' community, that is thinking of communities as 'natural' and beyond the control of their members. To supporters of the argument that 'communalism' was not a 'natural' feature of Indian life, this view of the community as something which did not necessarily emerge automatically but came about through a process of generating and sustaining people's sense of belonging through particular symbols, has been important.

Consequently, for a long time, much debate concerning modern South Asian history has been closely connected with this issue – apologists for British rule in effect lining up against supporters of the nationalist approach. Indeed, arguments that community identities were constructed around particular symbols during the colonial period were already circulating within South Asian historiography by the time that Benedict Anderson's 1983 *Imagined Communities* made much the same suggestion albeit approaching the question from a European starting point. By developing the idea about 'community' being a largely mental construct into his well-known broader conclusion that all communities larger than primordial villages are 'imagined', Anderson's writings provided additional weight in support of

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arguments that 'communities' in the subcontinent must be seen as essentially false constructs.<sup>4</sup>

More recently, in line perhaps with general revisionist trends within South Asian historiography, renewed emphasis has been placed on uncovering and identifying continuities in the history of the region. This has meant re-examining the whole business of 'community', its origins and its presumed naturalness, and whether or not (in its modern communal form) it pre-dates the colonial period, rather than hinging on any link with the imperial presence. Some historians, such as Christopher Bayly, have argued that perceptions of this kind of community existed prior to the colonial period, that 'community awareness' had already begun to emerge – had it never not existed – before British rule, but that what perhaps did change along with the political circumstances of the nineteenth century were the repercussions of such shifting patterns of awareness.<sup>5</sup>

The net result is that further shifts have occurred within the approaches taken towards the business of understanding and analysing the development of the 'community' in South Asia. It is now not just nationalist historians who approach the issue from this direction and the potential for 'community' identity to be constructed around certain symbols is now a well-established theme in the literature. 'Community' can now no longer be regarded as a uniquely traditional social relationship in contrast to 'modern' social forms, in other words, the impersonal, urbanised, rationalised and class-based social structures of industrial society. Historians of South Asia are now able to explain events there not in terms of a supposed clash between tradition and modernity but as part of the process by which the region has been changing or evolving during the modern age. Hence, growing support for understandings of 'community', in the subcontinent as elsewhere in the world, which emphasise its flexible, 'sense of belonging', which is not fixed in a static relationship with time and place, nor the automatic determinant of how the people who belong or associate with the community in question actually act.

These various theoretical insights would appear to apply very well to the subcontinent's Muslims, a sufficient proportion of whom by 1947 had overcome enough of their internal differences to support a common strategy to cope with independence: territorially dispersed, yet linked by what distinguished them from the majority



population, they harnessed a shared sense of attachment to their faith to political support for the Muslim League to drive its demands forward. So as far as these Muslims were concerned, the vision of a closely-knit and unified community of Islam became increasingly difficult to sustain, and the differentiated structure of the 'community', its regional and local diversities and deep-rooted sectarian and doctrinal disputes emerged as intrinsic to an accurate reading of pre-1947 developments.

Having made this point, it nevertheless remains startling the way in which an Indian Muslim political identity, constructed in the period leading up to independence and binding an apparent 'community' together pre-1947, contrasted very sharply with what might be argued as its virtual disintegration in the years which followed when 'communities' in the plural resurfaced to dominate the politics of independent Pakistan. To outside eyes, they may have all still been Muslims, but, in reality, this composite 'Muslim' identity was quickly refracted in the aftermath of partition. It was as if by making the transition to independence, groups of South Asian Muslims had passed through one of those glass prisms that first concentrates but then disperses light, producing a spectrum of colours, or in this case revealing the internal differences that had arguably continued to be present. By looking at the way in which these 'communities' re-emerged so swiftly following independence can place in better perspective how and to what extent a common identity, political or otherwise, had evolved in the first place.

What one finds when exploring Pakistan in the years following its creation is that many of the Muslims who now lived there retained an understanding of themselves as belonging to a wider community, but in their practical day-to-day lives they quickly reverted to emphasising more localised Muslim identities, while at the same time categorising themselves in new and sometimes unexpected ways. Muslims who found themselves already in the territory that was assigned to Pakistan had, it seems, quite distinct perceptions of their identity which only overlapped in part with the identity which migrants from India brought with them. The latter, forced by circumstances in large part beyond their immediate control, often clung to and reinforced their particular identities as a means of making some sense of the confusion into which they had been catapulted by partition-related migration. Individual groups of

refugees identified themselves by where they had come from, just as much if not more than where they had gone to - Pakistan. They tended to view, perhaps not unrealistically, Muslims already living in the territory that became Pakistan as distinct groups with different sets of interests and priorities to their own. From its very outset, 'Pakistan' represented a resource, access to which became the basis of struggle between these different groups. The difference in outlook and expectation of the various sets of Muslims, brought together under the Pakistan heading, revealed itself very quickly.

Looking at Sindh – the focus of my own historical study – in the period following independence highlights this very clearly. Here my research in recent years has concentrated on the inter-related process of migration, settlement, and integration of so-called refugees from India into the province.<sup>6</sup> Apart from anything else, the immediate post-1947 reveals a very complex set of relations existing between the different peoples who now comprised citizens of this new state. Not only were there differences between refugees and the inhabitants of the provinces where they settled. There were also considerable distinctions operating between the refugees themselves: while they shared a common experience in migrating (and a lot of political mileage was made out of this by politicians of the time), the circumstances of their 'flight' as well as of their 'welcome' were varied enough to make it difficult to generalise with too much confidence. In the case of a province such as Sindh, where prior to independence there had already developed a deepening sensitivity to the perceived threat posed to Sindhi autonomy by so-called 'outsiders', the arrival of huge quantities of refugees had swift repercussions as far as the problem of 'provincialism' was concerned. How to handle the challenge of accommodating millions of uprooted people was more than simply an administrative problem which required solving – it posed dilemmas which confronted the very basis of supposed Muslim solidarity upon which Pakistan had been ostensibly constructed, and it exposed the structural fragility of the political and community foundations that underlay the Pakistani state.

The picture which my research has helped to piece together of the condition of 'community relations' helps to reinforce understandings of the position of the subcontinent's Muslims as one that defies easy generalisation. It underlines the need to see

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community identity as something that is in a constant state of flux, changing and adapting to developing circumstances, rather than being fixed or working its way to something that would then remain fixed. It also reinforces the point that this flux is not necessarily a deliberate, calculated response on the part of individuals and interested parties but a fairly inevitable reaction to fast-changing circumstances, usually if not always beyond their control. If fluidity is a key to understanding the events leading up to 1947, then it would be surprising to expect a sudden freezing on the question of identity afterwards. In other words, the spectacular speed with which the Pakistan ideal seemed to disintegrate after 1947 does not necessarily lead to the swift conclusion that earlier religious solidarity was some kind of sham or manipulation of belief. Rather it highlights the complexity of the processes at work, and the need to acknowledge the multiple forces that shaped individual and community alike in the years straddling independence.

To end this reflection on a personal note, so many of us are involved in processes of historical investigation and analysis that propel us towards the uncomfortable position of, perhaps, simplifying what we find for the sake of clarity, having to question categories that are presented to us in the historical records of the time, or needing to test in some fashion the validity of the way in which usually outsiders, but insiders too, have viewed the social rhythms underpinning a particular society under scrutiny. In other words, none of us can take for granted how we approach the subjects of our inquiry. Instead, we need always to question and query the intellectual baggage that we bring with us to the task. The record shows that Professor Mubarak Ali has consistently operated as Pakistan's historical conscience and through his books and articles – whether these are aimed at an academic or popular audience – time and again he challenges his readers to think about how history is constructed and precisely why it cannot be allowed to become too comfortable. History, as he has taught us, is not meant to be reassuring – and unless it unsettles us, historians are not doing their job properly.

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Books

# Progressives and 'Perverts':\*

## Partition Stories and Pakistan's Future

Kamran Asdar Ali

Sa'adat Hasan Manto (1912 – 55), the Urdu short story writer, starts his story 'Toba Tek Singh'<sup>1</sup> with the assertion that after British India's partition the respective governments of India and Pakistan decided that inmates of mental asylums should be exchanged. So mentally ill Muslims in Indian hospitals were to be transferred to Pakistan, and Hindu and Sikh patients in Pakistani asylums would be sent to India. Manto's representation of partition's 'insanity' in this and other stories is now well known in literary and popular circles. It is by now also well known that the violence that followed the partition of British India was unprecedented in its scale and method.<sup>2</sup> As the violence in South Asia during the last few months of 1947 became a reality, social turmoil forced many, like Manto's mentally ill, to cross the still-porous borders toward unsettled lives in new and unseen lands.

This essay will discuss some of the intellectual debates among literary figures that followed the partition of South Asia in the newly formed state of Pakistan. As I develop my argument in the following pages, I suggest that as much as the new country was

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formed on an ideological platform of Muslim nationalism in South Asia, the shape of its future culture initially remained an open question.<sup>3</sup> Let me again turn to Manto to explain this point further. In an essay written as an introduction to a collection of his short stories in the early 1950s, Manto looks back at the time he spent in Bombay (twelve years) just before he migrated to Pakistan. He writes about the city with warmth and a sense of extreme loss yet is reconciled to the inevitable fact that he is now in Pakistan. But, he says, coming to the new country was an act full of uncertainty and anxiety:

No one had given it a thought that after such a revolution things would not remain the same. Whether small alleys would become large highways or their existence would be completely lost, we did not have an answer. Would there be a difference between the governance by foreigners or by those we call our own, about this people were not sure either. How would the new cultural and social atmosphere nurture our thoughts and feelings? What would be the relationship between the state, government, community and the individual? These were issues that we needed to seriously concentrate on.<sup>4</sup>

Manto's voice helps us to rethink the moment in Pakistan's history when contesting voices of uncertainty and confusion, against an emerging nationalist framework, discussed and debated the shape that Pakistan's social, political, and cultural life would take in the ensuing years. This was not an easy task; the question faced by various intellectuals and perhaps the state as well was how one even thinks about, writes about, or seeks to build a future immediately after witnessing (and in many cases living through) a catastrophe or carnage like the killings, arson, disappearances, and rapes of the partition. Entire communities that until recently had lived together turned against one another, and the carnage that followed undermined long-held practices of shared existence and tolerance.

However, periods of war and destruction also undermine normative values and loosen moral strictures. As chaos and random violence ensue, a new beginning can also be imagined in the ruins of the old order. As in Europe after the two wars of the

twentieth century,<sup>5</sup> the violence of the mid-1940s in South Asia created opportunities for writers and intellectuals to rethink past certainties and generate visions for the future. Hence this sense of destruction of shared values after experiencing an 'apocalyptic' event may have led to imagining other possibilities in new surroundings and, in my opinion, may have been partially responsible for the spate of literature that dealt with partition. These works were written from various ideological perspectives and personal experiences, and the debates that followed argued for conceiving different future trajectories for the newly independent country.

Within this larger context, in Pakistan's first decade of existence there were clear camps of intellectuals who had competing claims linked to various ideological positions that sought to impress on the state and the populace the legitimacy of one set of ideas over others. One group with a clear ideological perspective was the set of intellectuals closely aligned with the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP). The CPP as a continuation of the Communist Party of India (CPI) had some roots in the worker and peasant movement in the new country, but it is most remembered for its influence on the literary and intellectual debates of the era through its control of the All Pakistan Progressive Writers Association (APPWA). Of course there was opposition from various quarters to this particular understanding of culture and literary undertaking. Yet other groups were not as organized and consisted of a range of free thinkers, modernist poets, and independent-minded intellectuals, along with those who sought to link the question of Pakistan with Islamic morals and values.<sup>6</sup> The latter group was intellectually eclectic and divided,<sup>7</sup> and many had also previously been close to the progressives.

In the following pages as I discuss the writings of specific personalities who belonged to these sides of the political spectrum, I will not provide another survey of the discussions on religion (Islam's role in the new country) and national belonging (patriotism, Muslim nationalism) within intellectual circles at the moment of Pakistan's inception — work that has been excellently performed by many.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to these dominant representational themes through which Pakistan's history is rendered intelligible to many, I will particularly focus on a debate

surrounding the question of morality ('pure or perverse literature') connected to a text of short stories on the partition by Manto himself. To be sure, I concentrate on the exchanges between certain intellectuals in post-independence Pakistan surrounding Manto's book to suggest how these arguments were not only limited to the literary sphere, but also raised pertinent questions regarding human subjectivity and its relation to the uncharted future facing Pakistan at the moment of its birth. By focusing on Manto's writings I revisit this period to demonstrate how, after Pakistan's creation, there was continued debate among intellectuals about what would constitute a national culture — a discussion that may still be ongoing and incomplete.

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Manto's work enables me to open a space to specifically speak about this incompleteness by tracing the emergent post-partition identities in the new country. Historians have argued that Pakistan's creation was a partial resolution of the contradiction between the particularism of Muslim identity in South Asia, linked as it was to locality and place, and the larger construction of Muslim moral community connected to a territorially bounded nation-state.<sup>9</sup> As much as the Pakistan movement led by the Muslim League in the 1940s sought to transcend divisions among Muslims through the symbol of the emergent state and the formation of the moral sovereign, the diversity of people's lives and particularistic cultural experiences remained in perpetual tension to this order.<sup>10</sup> However, the mistrust shown by the new Pakistani state, wrapped as it was in the ideology of Muslim nationalism, toward the diverse aspirations of its own people led to imposition on the populace of a meta-narrative of an undivided nation. A reaction to this political process was the gradual cracking of the constructed ideological edifice of a unified Muslim moral community. For example, by the mid-1950s the promise of the Muslim nationalism that had led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947 was severely put to the test by regional and nationalistic claims of Pakistan's diverse ethnic groups.

Foremost among these was the voice of its Bengali citizens, who as the largest demographic claimed their economic and linguistic rights from the overtly centralizing state in Karachi, fourteen hundred miles away from Dhaka.<sup>11</sup>

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India's.



Within this historical trajectory, since its creation in 1947 as the homeland for Muslims of South Asia, Pakistan has been a configuration of shifting alliances and competing political and social ideologies. Culturally, the Mohajirs (literally, refugees; those who migrated from India), along with the majority Punjabi ethnic group, have been the most closely linked with Muslim nationalism and with Urdu as the Pakistani national language.<sup>12</sup> I do not have the space here to discuss the history of communalization of the Urdu language as the language of South Asian Muslims. However, during the struggle for Pakistan's creation and after its independence, Pakistan's political leadership did emphasize such a linkage at the cost of even alienating Muslim ethnic populations, such as Bengalis, Pashtuns, Sindhis, and Balochis, that lived within its own borders. Today, more than sixty years after its independence and forty years after the creation of Bangladesh, the Pakistani state has been unable to resolve the question of national integration of its many cultures and diverse linguistic groups.

Shahid Amin, in his rendition of another South Asian event of the early twentieth century, reminds us how nationalist master narratives can induce selective national amnesia in relation to events that fit awkwardly into neatly woven patterns.<sup>13</sup> As much as this paper in its conclusion will suggest an alternative historical reading of the early years of Pakistan's history, it will also use Manto's fiction to raise the question of how the marginal, the everyday, and the unpredictable are represented in order to bring an alternative historical reading forward to contest more established renditions of the past.

Within this context, I read Manto's work partly in light of what we have come to expect perhaps from contemporary queer theory, a theoretical framework that depathologizes sexuality within public life and also makes it possible to revalue and document the 'nonnormative ways of living'.<sup>14</sup> Manto during his brief life was duly criticized by his literary colleagues and others for his excessive drinking and his wayward lifestyle, and also for the depiction in his writings of what Aamir Mufti calls 'sexually and morally displaced figures'.<sup>15</sup> Manto, in these terms, could be read as a queer subject, both for his choice of characters and for his own personal anti-conformist lifestyle.<sup>16</sup> That said, as José Esteban Muñoz argues, queerness is linked to thinking about

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another world and a rejection of the status quo;<sup>17</sup> it is an undermining of linear history (the history of 'progress' in Benjaminian terms)<sup>18</sup> and opens historical analysis to multiple temporalities. Queer time for some writers is the turning away from the certainty of the dominant narrative of a developmental life cycle that follows the trajectory from adolescence to death through reproduction and child rearing. Queer subjects then are those who live outside what Judith Halberstam would call 'reproductive time' or family time and also at the edges of logics of capital accumulation.<sup>19</sup> Hence ravers, club kids, the homeless, sex workers, the unemployed, the drug dealers, and others become 'queer subjects' as they may work when others sleep and also inhabit spaces that others have abandoned. These are also subjects that are inherently at social, economic, and physical risk while they live 'without financial safety nets, without homes, without steady jobs, outside the organizations of time and space that have been established for the purposes of protecting the rich few from everyone else'.<sup>20</sup>

Hence I import queer theory into this discussion to interpret Manto's stories in which many of his protagonists are marginal characters and discards of society, like sex workers, addicts, pimps, cab drivers, and petty criminals. These depictions of the 'morally displaced' clearly question the normative constructions of the national subject during the process of assembling a nationalist project in newly independent South Asian states and are emblematic of some queer performances and creative efforts that may not be congealed into a dominant argument or a master narrative.

Although the characters in Manto's fiction are invariably similar to the people Halberstam posits as 'queer subjects,' Manto's work preceded the development of the theoretical paradigm of queer studies. Yet, significantly, as Ann Cvetkovich's suggests, Manto does allow me to move queer studies across historical and geographical boundaries, away from the recent history of gay and lesbian identities and communities in the Western metropolis.<sup>21</sup>

Further, to reiterate my earlier point, Manto also enables me to offer a critique of Pakistan's normative national history and to suggest a different path to understand the country's past and possibly its future.

In following the debates around Manto's writings, this essay relies on research in public and private archives, newspaper reports, and memoirs of key participants in the debates. Some of the most valuable sources were found in Urdu literary journals of the era that helped me to follow the discussions of more than sixty years ago. Working with this non-Western archive, primarily in Urdu, at times meant trying to locate original editions of literary magazines and journals in libraries and private collections. Some of the material has been republished in recent years, but the editing has been selective. Other important sources, especially on the Communist Party, were police reports from a private archival collection in Pakistan and the political reports sent by British diplomats to the United Kingdom. There is very little cultural history written on Pakistan of the early period, so tracing certain assertions through a range of memoirs became 'detective' work that had its own pleasures. As stories took their own life in various narrations, they also opened up avenues for further speculation and analysis.

To situate the debates, in this essay I will initially provide a brief discussion of the Communist Party's position on the Muslim question in British India. Following this I will present intellectual interventions and contesting voices that are critical of one another — but also of state-imposed sanctions and ideals — in order to rethink Pakistan's early history (with all the messiness of the debates and arguments) as a period that could have led to a range of possible future historical trajectories<sup>22</sup>

### Communists in a Muslim land

In late February 1948, the Communist Party of India (CPI) held its second congress in Calcutta<sup>23</sup>. The most important task performed during the congress was the shift toward a more radical political line by the party and a severe critique of reformist politics of the party leadership during most of the 1940s. As much as these discussions were the main focus of the congress, the delegates also took some time to divide the party into two constitutive parts: the CPI would confine its work to the boundaries of the Indian Union, and the post – August 1947 separated territories of Pakistan would be free to form a different communist party.

After the resolution on Pakistan was passed, the delegates from Pakistan met separately and convened the first congress of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP). It accepted with amendments the CPI's Report on Pakistan,<sup>(24)</sup> containing the resolution, and elected its first office bearers. Syed Sajjad Zaheer (1905 – 73), who was a member of the central committee of CPI, was elected general secretary as he had opted to go to Pakistan. Like Zaheer, and very much like inmates in Manto's fictitious asylum, other Muslim members of the CPI were asked to follow, but many senior Muslim members declined.<sup>(25)</sup> Zaheer belonged to a very prominent, educated, and respected Muslim family from the United Provinces of the Owdh area.<sup>(26)</sup> After the Calcutta conference Zaheer came to Pakistan as the leader of the nascent party. Zaheer's attitude toward Pakistan and the Muslim League reflected the radical line of the CPI, which saw the need for the Muslim masses to be made conscious of their nationalistic (in this sense against the division of British India along communal lines) and historical duty and wrenched away from their communally-minded feudal Muslim League leadership.

In researching this body of work on Pakistan's early years, it became evident that the arena of culture and intellectual creativity was of immense importance to the CPP and to Zaheer himself. Zaheer, an accomplished short story writer and literary critic, did not produce much literary work during these early years in Pakistan, yet he was constantly writing for party newspapers and sending long letters to all party committees. He also found time to read what was being written in the various literary journals and newspapers and would send individual comments and criticism to foes and friends alike. The militancy in his letters to party comrades was represented often with dictatorial language, giving much importance to the dissemination of party literature, opposition to the Muslim League leaders (he calls them downright scoundrels), and the building of open political fronts linked to other progressive forces in the country.<sup>27</sup>

One of these fronts was the reestablishment and reorganization of the AIPWA (commonly called the PWA). The PWA was one of the most influential literary movements in the decade that preceded the partition of British India. It was initially formed by a group of Indian students like Mulk Raj Anand and

Zaheer, who were living in England during the 1930s. With annual gatherings, regional meetings, and affiliated literary journals, the movement attracted writers and intellectuals from almost all Indian languages; its strength, however, lay among the Urdu-Hindi writers of that era. The association from its very inception was influenced by socialist and Marxist tendencies, and soon after his return from Britain in 1935 – 36, Zaheer himself joined the CPI. Hence, although the PWA was open to all who broadly agreed with its manifesto — which called for a new literature that addressed progressive ideals and focused on the issues of poverty, deprivation, and servitude of the Indian masses — it soon became closely aligned with the CPI.<sup>28</sup>

As noted earlier in this essay, the All Pakistan Progressive Writers Association (APPWA) was a continuation of the All India Progressive Writers Association (AIPWA) and similarly closely affiliated with the newly formed CPP.<sup>29</sup> Within this context, the CPP, in control of APPWA and influenced by CPI's radical line, had by the late 1940s started to purge from its ranks those who did not completely toe the new party line. This became more evident after the introduction of the new manifesto, which targeted 'non-progressive' writers during the first APPWA conference held in Lahore in November 1949. During this conference, the non-progressive intellectuals were severely criticized for their perceived political failings, alliance with the state machinery, sexual perversions, and lack of social consciousness.<sup>30</sup> The manifesto for this meeting clearly divides the Pakistani cultural scene into many factions and speaks positively of those intellectuals who raise their voices against the ruling class and struggle against oppression and for independence, peace, and socialism.<sup>31</sup> Their writings, the manifesto proclaims, are full of optimism, progressive ideals, and a willingness to move the working class toward action. In opposition to these intellectuals, it says, are the groups that are undemocratic, support the status quo, and through their writings create confusion in people's minds. The manifesto in strong and uncompromising language establishes three groups of reactionary intellectuals. The first are the writers who proclaim the ideology of art for art's sake. The text criticizes these writers as denying class struggle and hence acting in collusion with the ruling classes. The second group is designated as those who claim to write Pakistani literature. They

too are condemned as people who favour the capitalist and feudal classes of the new country and in their communalist hatred toward India cannot differentiate between Nehru's fascist government and Indian working classes. The third group is labeled as Islamic writers who seek to establish Islamic law in the country. The manifesto lumps all of these writers — Islamists, nationalists, and liberals (art for art's sake) — into the same basket and paints them as reactionaries. The published manifesto then turns toward those writers who use bourgeois psychology and Freudian parameters to understand society. These authors are rendered as perverse, pornographic, and decadent for their depiction of life through the lens of sexuality. They not only distort people's experience, the manifesto asserts, but also disrespect love as a pure form of desire.<sup>62</sup> Hence the manifesto portrays these writers as anti-humanists who can only make fun of the people's creative faculty and are insensitive to the struggle for human existence. The protagonists of their works are killers, thieves, prostitutes, and those elements of society that do not contribute to society's productive process, it says; they write pessimistic stories that sing of darkness and of death.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the arguments on literature and sexual themes, other areas of debate stand out. One was the significance of partition literature; others dealt with the question of loyalty to Pakistan and the issue of Urdu as the national language.<sup>34</sup> Below I discuss more specifically the debates on partition literature with a focus on Manto's writings on the topic.

### **Partition, progressives, and 'perversion'**

During the late 1940s the progressives were dominant on the literary scene, and their insistence on creative activity that focused on a clear ideological position was the legacy of their anticolonial and class-based politics. To take a more concrete example, on 11 December 1948 in a weekly literary meeting organized in Lahore by the APPWA, Abdullah Malik, an APPWA office holder and member of the CPP, presented a paper for discussion on a new text by Manto titled (*Siah Hashye*) (Black Margins) that comprised very short stories on the partition.<sup>35</sup> In it, Malik argued that Manto does indeed portray a system that is breaking down but does not show

us the system that is rising from this rubble. Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, the secretary general of the Association, reacted:

In the initial section of the article the author [Malik] claims that Manto unveils social wounds, but does not provide the treatment. In my opinion there has to be a difference between literature and writer. An artist who merely sketches social portraits can also be progressive. In addition how does the writer come to the conclusion that Manto does not analyze his characters from a social perspective or that his short stories are reflective of death or his protagonists are primarily individualistic? It is possible that Manto does not have the remedy for social problems, but it is incorrect to say that he has only portrayed weak and tired characters. For example in 'Halfia Biyan' ['Deposition under Oath,' a short story in the volume] he has suggested ways of understanding our changing society and *Khol Do (Open It)* is a successful example of his realistic temperament. We should not create a final impression of Manto's work until we have read all his stories.<sup>36</sup>

Another writer, Hameed Akhtar Oureshi, argued: 'Manto mostly has sick characters very few of them seem healthy. A majority of his characters are abnormal'<sup>37</sup>

After further discussion and severe criticism of Manto's text, Qasmi ends the discussion by backtracking on his earlier support: 'The writer should have written this paper with more detail and clarity. However, I am in agreement with the paper's argument about Manto's text. In this new book Manto's abnormality has reached its zenith. I regretfully say that while reading *Siah Hashiye* I felt as if dead bodies were scattered all over a large field and the short story writer was stealing money and cigarettes from their pockets'.<sup>38</sup>

I present these quotes from a longer exchange to give a flavor of how these weekly gatherings would take up various discussions and reach a consensus about what was and was not considered progressive literature. It may be clear from the above that the main critique against Manto by the assembled progressive intellectuals was that although Manto realistically portrays the declining social order, he does not give the reader a sense of the

emerging 'new order'. His characters were deemed weak and ineffectual, and his plots, although acknowledged as realistic, were dismissed as pessimistic and perverse; a pleasurable perversion that hinted, according to some, at Manto's own pathologies and deviances. Some in this meeting defended one of the greatest living Urdu short story writers from such attacks and argued that not all writers need have a solution to society's ills; to make people think was perhaps enough of a social task.<sup>39</sup> One disgruntled participant, who remained unconvinced by the tone and temper of the discussion, argued that if we as writers are so concerned about finding cures, then we should open up a doctor's clinic and not continue in our profession. But these were minority voices, and the larger consensus kept on bracketing Manto's work in terms of its inadequate relationship to a healthy society (the medical metaphors abound in this discussion).

In condemning Manto's text as a perversion, the discussants were also following a well established critique of nonprogressive writers who were publishing stories and poems on the violence during partition. Hence converting a series of Manto's short stories on the absurdity of violence into a text about sexual deviance becomes a dismissive move, a move that uses an historical materialist lens and the primacy of social structure to undermine Manto's empathy for individual experience. The progressives argued that reactionary authors did not understand or write on the social and political aspect of the violence and merely presented psychological and sexual renditions of the events.<sup>40</sup> Ali Sardar Jafri, a famous and well respected progressive poet, asserted in contrast that the progressives deeply analyzed the situation from social and political angles and found the light of humanity even in this darkest hour of the nation's history.<sup>41</sup>

It should be evident from the above discussion that the issue of perversion and sexuality was a major concern within literary circles during the late 1940s. Themselves under attack for tolerating such works, the progressives had become very sensitive to this criticism, and in an almost puritanical mode sought to distance themselves from writers who were free thinkers and were writing poetry or stories with explicit sexual content. In their analytical writings they acknowledged that some writers like Manto may have produced good art at particular moments in their

Manto wrote about  
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violence.  
However, critics fail  
to grasp  
metaphors  
wrapped up  
sexual  
deviance.



literary careers but had since become escapist writers who took refuge in sexual themes.<sup>42</sup> Progressive stalwarts like Jafri and even Zaheer argued that these free thinkers and liberal artists possessed a sick mentality that made them avoid people's problems. Hence in Pakistan's early years there was much anxiety present among progressive writers to create a distance from those who were perceived by them as standard bearers of middle-class values and perverted literature.<sup>43</sup> For example, Jafri attacked poets like N. M. Rashid (d. 1975), a major modernist poet of the era, arguing that he and others like him were perpetrators of the death wish, escapists, and obsessed with sexual themes and condemning Manto for elevating such topics to the level of religious belief.<sup>44</sup> During the late 1940s, another progressive intellectual, Aziz Ahmed, in his book on the subject accused people like Manto of being so obsessed with sexuality that he wondered whether they were mentally stable. He goes on to say that this perversion had entered Urdu literature due to the influence of D. H. Lawrence who, according to Ahmed, no longer held the respect of British literary circles.<sup>45</sup> Within this context, Qasmi, in an important defense of progressive literature, proclaimed that the progressives had learnt from their mistakes and had cleansed their house from the impure infections brought in by perverted artists whose pornographic work and psychological analysis was influenced by the decadent intellectual, Sigmund Freud.<sup>46</sup>

Ironic as it may seem, calling works of literature obscene meant taking them out of public circulation — a framing that seemed akin to the censorship that progressives themselves at times suffered under the moral surveillance of the community and the state (colonial or postcolonial).<sup>47</sup> As Geeta Patel masterfully explains, the progressives in this period absorbed the critique directed at them and used these same rules of morality and propriety to expel those whom they deemed to be improper from within their own ranks.<sup>48</sup> Even if we take Freud's psychoanalytical model, the simplified reading of perversion is the persistence of earlier phases of development in maturity. These often infantile drives and pleasures are to be repressed, tamed, and disciplined by education and the moral force of shame, disgust, and embarrassment to create the proper bourgeois subject: a tamed adult (there is the persistence of hydraulic images in Freud of

dams and flows of energy into 'proper direction' in adolescence).<sup>49</sup> The progressives, while distancing themselves from Freud, were also paradoxically using his terms. In a way, by condemning other writers as perverts, the leftists were perhaps calling people like Manto children who had yet to grow up into mature and responsible adults. Ironically, they may have followed Freud's own arguments about adulthood's emergence from the unruly past of adolescence; by seeking to censor speech they were performing a task akin to repressing infantile behavior — the behavior of someone who has not come to his or her senses — so that a tamed adult could appear.<sup>50</sup>

### The writer responds

*Siyah Hashiye* is a book of very short stories that depicts the absurdness and the arbitrary nature of partition's violence. I of course do not have space here to present each and every story, but I will share a few of their plots in an attempt to convey the flavor of Manto's writing. One story, titled 'Safai Pasandi' ('Clean Habits'), is about a stationary train (implicitly during the time of partition) where some people come and ask about whether there are any 'roosters' around. The passengers initially hesitate, but then one answers that the people should themselves look in the trunk on the berth above them. Armed with spears, some men enter the compartment and break the trunk, where they find a 'rooster'.<sup>51</sup> One calls out asking whether he should sacrifice the 'rooster'.<sup>52</sup> The other replies, 'No, not here, take it out of the train, the compartment's floor would get dirty'. The story ends here.<sup>53</sup>

Another story is titled 'Sorry,' as in the English word. It consists of a few sentences depicting the act of stabbing. The knife continues beyond the abdomen and cuts open the trousers. The killer laments and just says, 'Uh oh, I committed a mistake,' leading the reader to believe that as the trouser falls down, the 'identity' of the victim is revealed in some capacity.<sup>54</sup> Yet another story is 'Munasib Karawai' ('The Proper Decision'). The story opens with a married couple who after hiding in their basement for several days feel compelled to come out. They go to their neighbor's house and implore the neighbors to kill them, as they cannot bear it anymore. The neighbors, who are Jains, say that it is clearly against their religion to kill people. After giving the request some thought,

however, they deliver the couple to people in an adjoining neighborhood who do not share the same beliefs.

In the post-partition climate, when everyone was trying to understand or perhaps forget the carnage of the past year, such pieces of fiction had an uneasy aura about them. These morally ambiguous and disturbing stories that most of the time did not mark people through their religious or cultural affiliations gave rise to the kind of criticism presented above.<sup>55</sup> For Manto these were not new accusations. In the late 1940s he had several times been taken to court by the state on charges of writing indecent literature.<sup>56</sup> It is ironic that the progressives thought Manto represented middle-class values. Rather, his work and life especially in the late 1940s challenged and disrupted middle-and bourgeois morality. As mentioned in the introduction, his excessive drinking, personal mannerisms, and at times inappropriate public behavior, in addition to his stories, made those around him uncomfortable.<sup>57</sup> It can be argued that the attacks reflected the moral positioning of the progressives themselves, who sought to negate Manto's libertine lifestyle and found it socially regressive.<sup>58</sup>

In a short essay, Manto addressed these questions in his own distinctive style.<sup>59</sup> In the essay he rhetorically questions why people constantly ask him about sex. He answers by arguing that it is perhaps because they think he is a progressive writer (and hence does not adhere to traditional moral codes), or because some of his writings deal with the topic, or perhaps it is that by raising such issues people want to banish him from religion, from the world of literature, and from society altogether. He then makes use of familiar progressive tropes of realism, optimism, and human needs (the medical metaphors are there, too) to argue his point. For example, Manto says that man's struggle against hunger and his needs for sex are universal facts that even religious texts discuss, so why should literature not represent the relationship between a man and a woman? He insists that writers are not prophets; rather than giving final answers, they tend to analyze the same phenomena from various perspectives and present it to the world without insisting that people accept their offerings. Manto asserts that he does not write on sexuality, but portrays the sexual lives of particular men and women. Those who seek sexual pleasure in such stories, according to him, should understand that writers like

him are not wrestling coaches who train people in the techniques of the art; rather they are mere observers. So, when a wrestler falls to the ground, writers according to their ability explain the causes for the fall. Within the same logic, depiction of prostitutes — as suggested in the introduction, his chosen characters were prostitutes, pimps, madams, vagabonds, the mentally insane, horse-carriage drivers, and religious minorities such as Christians and Jews (the marginal, the queer) — is not intended to make them attractive or to abhor them, but rather to show the spark of humanity within each and every individual irrespective of his or her position in life.

Responding to the progressives, he proclaims that writers like him need to be considered optimists who also find light in society's darkness. Rather than pass moral judgments about human failings, Manto states, he wants to understand people's motivations for their actions. This is an empathetic move that Manto makes toward the marginal and the morally suspect protagonists of his stories. Much like Judith Halberstam in her depiction and discussion of 'queer subjects,' Manto does not pass judgment on the moral leanings of his characters, but rather asks us to enter their life-worlds to appreciate and understand what leads them to act in certain ways. He also asserts that it is not humans who should be condemned for their actions; the real culprits are the social circumstances that create the environment in which people exist and make 'moral' and 'immoral' choices. He thus pushes us to rethink those historical trajectories whose unfolding and perspectives are already known and urges us to appreciate lived experiences and practices howsoever messy and unpredictable they may be.

In the final paragraphs of the essay, Manto turns to the most important social subject of the time, the violence and social changes due to British India's division. Above we clearly saw that Manto's book of short stories on partition was criticized for its pornographic content and perverted sense of reality. In the essay under discussion, Manto shows how partition and sexuality are intrinsically linked. He raises the question, what should the artist create in the midst of people killing each other in the name of religion, when one law can divide the country into two, and during times when nothing seems sacred? Yet, in this moment of

V. I. Iyengar  
relationship  
between  
partition  
and  
sexuality.

uncertainty and chaos, Manto answers, no politics, law, or religion could separate the two sexes. People who regard writings that depict common men and women as immoral or perverse need to understand, Manto metaphorically asserts, that morality is the rust that has accumulated on society's blades. In negating traditional morality (not unlike the progressives), he too defends his writing as realistic, necessary, and optimistic, as it shows us the 'true' face of society. Yet, he acknowledges that this kind of writing can be a bitter pill, 'like the leaves from the Neem tree, they are bitter, but they do cleanse the blood'.<sup>60</sup> Through his elaboration on the contradictions of postindependence emergent society — where nothing remained sacred, lives had been uprooted, relationships had been reconfigured — and his depiction of the 'perverse' and the sexually suspect, Manto criticized the insistence on recouping a moral order (whether by the progressives or by the state) that sought to impose normative behavior on a social landscape that had fundamentally changed.

### **Other ways of being human**

In the immediate post-independence moment, Mohammad Hasan Askari (1919 – 78) was one of the major critics of the progressives. Askari's is an important voice in the history of Urdu criticism; it is he whom Aamir Mufti rightly proclaims as a magisterial intellect, a polyglot of staggering erudition. In his youth, Askari had been close to the progressives, as they were the dominant literary movement of the time. However, later, Askari, along with others like the poet N. M. Rashid and even the poet Meeraji,<sup>61</sup> became associated with the modernist movement, or that of *jadidiyat*. This of course was not a movement in the conventional sense of the term but a trend in literature that experimented with form through which writers sought to channel experience.<sup>62</sup> Askari soon after independence had started arguing for a specifically Pakistani literature and found the Muslim progressives, especially the more left-leaning communists within the literary movement, to be alienated from their own cultural history and also to be uncommitted to the idea of Pakistan itself. This was a major charge that he pushed in his writings of the time with much force.

In a series of articles published in October and November 1948, Askari discusses how, after Pakistan's independence, Muslim

intellectuals should think about culture and literature in this new land and look ahead toward an unprecedented and uncharted future.<sup>63</sup> A major thrust of his argument in these essays is how the writer/intellectual should understand and represent the material needs of the populace. This impulse to connect with the masses echoes the argument made by the progressives. However, in a subtle intervention, Askari suggests that mere advocacy of the economic needs of the people is not enough, as people also have nonmaterial and spiritual needs. Unless the intellectual understands these demands the masses will not come any closer. This, according to Askari, was the major and primary intellectual task. This spiritual need was linked in Askari's early writings to the creation of the Muslim homeland as a culmination of the Muslim nation's desire for freedom. He forcefully recognizes the cumulative aspiration for a space where Muslims could think, live, and create freely, a space devoid of censorship and surveillance and influenced by their own history and cultural heritage. Of course his attempt to push this agenda, he complains, was being marred by the negative attitude of the Pakistani state against intellectual and creative production — an attitude enacted through various forms of censorship, propaganda, and coercion. Askari argues that only in a society that is based on social justice, economic progress, and the defense of individual freedoms can arts and cultures flourish.<sup>64</sup>

While disagreeing with the government's censorship policies, Askari also openly attacked the Muslim communists (such as Zaheer) who, according to him, negated or distorted the history of Muslim culture and society. Further, he attacked the progressives based on his understanding of tradition as a key element in the development of new Urdu literature. Meher Afshan Farooqi in an essay on Askari's work shows how the terms *progressive* (*taraqui*) and *modernist/modernity* (*jadidiyat*) are not connotatively very far apart. She argues that for the progressive writers the issue of form was not relevant, and for most (there were always exceptions, like the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz), the desire was to break from the past, bringing in modern Western concerns to show the decadence and backwardness of Muslim society and relate literature to immediate political concerns, while people like Askari wanted to retain a link with the more classical tradition of

own vision of a more egalitarian future. In doing so they used the trope of sexual deviancy to curb the chaos that they thought would ensue from 'nonprogressive' literature. It was a morally conformist politics that was in Benjaminian terms also linked to a history of redemption; a history that conquers nature with technology and glorifies work while never probing the creative multiplicity of the social.<sup>87</sup> This political stance of the communists was at times dangerously close to that of its own opposition, the Pakistani state and the Islamists, for example, as they too were seeking to create a universalist politics of social identity and homogeneity and a rational society. In this rational-universal world of order and truth there would be no contingency and no ambivalence.<sup>88</sup>

The historical certainty of the Marxists aside, it would be fair to argue that scholars like Askari (despite his views on Manto's text) or Taseer were — much like the new Pakistani state — as eager to create a new world on the ashes of the old. Pakistan for them was a regenerative project where a new 'Muslim' culture could prosper. Manto may have been marginal to such programmatic agendas, but Askari definitely sought to counter his attack on the progressives with the excitement of being given a fresh start in a place called Pakistan. Yet the idea of a new nation and its distinct identity after a process of fragmentation — as the history of partition had created — can, as Jaqueline Rose argues, also lead to fissures and to the alienation of those newly arrived in diaspora (those who migrated from India).<sup>89</sup> It can make the new arrivals dig for a history that may eventually legitimate state violence. This came to pass in Pakistan's subsequent history as the emergence of Islam as a state ideology, linked to Urdu as the national language, violently undermined the political aspirations of other linguistic, religious, and cultural groups. In some ways this was a politics of closure, of forced consensus, and of order (based on an implied threat of a perpetual state of emergency).<sup>90</sup>

In conclusion, following Walter Benjamin, I would argue that both the Marxists and the state were enmeshed in similar kinds of historicist visions in which history was progressing toward a desired future — proletarian revolution or Muslim state.<sup>91</sup> In following this argument, the question for me in this essay has not been to find a preconceived progressive or retrogressive politics in Manto's text. I suggest a reading that may enable us to move away

from liberal modernist interpretive strategies that force the plurality of social life into the representational apparatus of a particular political philosophy.<sup>92</sup> As Manto in nonprogrammatic terms sought to depict the ordinary and the everyday in order to make sense of the tumultuous events of the partition, his interventions force us to rethink how history manifests itself at the level of affective experience and even sexuality. By using characters that are morally ambiguous and depicting people from the margins of societies as protagonists of his stories he very much revalues the nonnormative ways of living.<sup>93</sup> Hence in his work, as in queer studies, I find there is an idiosyncratic and unpredictable sense of the future that contains within itself political elements that depend on everyday forms of cultural expression, and such forms may not always rely upon fixed categories of institutionalized politics.<sup>94</sup>

Manto's characters

For example, in the above-mentioned short story 'Peshawar Express' by the progressive writer Chander, eventually the train, which is the protagonist of the story, dreams of a progressive future of peace and order. In contrast, Manto was constantly agitated in his writings about settled endings. In one of his essays he gives an example of a young, middle-class, beautiful woman who runs away with a destitute good-for-nothing young man.<sup>95</sup> Rather than moralize about her, Manto wonders about her life and unresolved future. He does not want her to 'come to her senses,' as a normative rendition of this story would demand; rather, he shows how desire creates moments in which different histories — the middle-class woman, the underclass man — brush against each other. In these terms, Manto queers history by positing the particular life histories and the related counter-logics that emerge from the 'perversities' of such existences and forwards a critique of the generalized subjectivities that take on the onus of the universal<sup>96</sup>

Manto's short stories written after the carnage of 1947 during the early years of Pakistan's existence can, therefore, be read as representing his ambivalence and uncertainty about the consolidation of a unitary identity in the Pakistani state. The rupture and the calamity of the partition was already constituting new identities in Pakistan, and a language of tolerance and compassion that was being perpetuated by liberals and



conservatives alike — one language (Urdu), one religion (Islam), one people (Pakistani), or, for that matter, class solidarity — could not work as a palliative for the unsettling, troubling, and disabling wound. No calm or resolution was possible for this history.<sup>97</sup> The 'real history' that would come afterward (the nationalist historiography of Muslim nationalism)<sup>98</sup> would seek to override or repress the flaw, and this wound was bound to make such resolutions indecisive.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Toba Tek Singh is a town and district in the Central Punjab region of Pakistan. Manto uses the name of the town, as the protagonist of the story comes from this area and does not want to leave his ancestral land to migrate to India

<sup>2</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> My arguments are also in contrast to historical representations that dominate the retelling of Pakistan's history. For example, one narrative about the first ten years of its independence is that of the failure of the ruling classes to institute a parliamentary government. Muslim League, the party that led the nation to its independence, had by the mid-1950s disintegrated into multiple factions representing different social, economic, and regional interest groups. By 1956, when the first constitution of the country was passed, the bureaucracy aligned with the military had effectively sidelined all other political forces and was in control of the state machinery, leading to a military intervention that unseated the civilian government. Another narrative retells the story of Muslim nationalism and its logical continua-continuation in the Objective Resolution for an Islamic State of the late 1940s (demanding the Islamization of laws, this Objective Resolution was written by a group of Islamic scholars in Pakistan in 1949 and was passed by the Constituent Assembly), culminating in the Zia-era Islamization in the 1980s and the proliferation of contemporary Islamist politics.

<sup>4</sup> Sa'adat Hasan Manto, 'Jaib-e-Kafan' ('The Shroud's Pocket'), in *Manto Nama* (Lahore: Sang e Meel, 1990), pp.221-29; first published as the introduction to the volume of collected short stories by Manto, *Yazid* (Lahore: Maktabah e Sher o Adab, 1975 [originally published in 1951]).

disintegration  
of the  
Muslim  
League

<sup>5</sup> In the ongoing larger work on post-partition South Asia, I discuss how history can be written or imagined in a post-catastrophic moment. Within this framework the sentiments expressed by Manto were not unlike the philosophical introspections by European intellectuals after the two world wars during the first half of the twentieth century. World redemption and world destruction, hopelessness, and prophecies of a glorious future are familiar tropes of the ideologies and philosophical arguments that suffused Europe after the two wars. For example, while the World War I produced images of universal destruction and messianic redemption, World War II was an apocalyptic moment that was more anti-redemptive. Hannah Arendt was clear in seeing that Nazis were people like us and hence the question of evil became a fundamental one for postwar European life; the legacy of progress, secularism, and rationalism could not be unlinked from events that seemed to violate these ideals.

See Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp.10-11; Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees', in *The Jew As Pariah*, ed. Ron Feldman (New York: Grove, 1997, pp.55-66 [originally published in 1943]); and Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-Europeans* (New York: Verso, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Eventually many of them became associated with Halqa-Arbab-e-Zauq. While APPWA included names like Hamid Akhtar, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sibte Hasan, Ibrahim Jalees, Abdullah Malik, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, and Sajjad Zaheer under its banner, the 'non-progressives' consisted of, among others, Ahmad Ali, Mohammad Hasan Askari, Sa'adat Hasan Manto, Mumtaz Mufti, Akhtar Hussein Raipuri, N. M. Rashid, M. D. Taseer, and Mumtaz Shirin.

<sup>7</sup> Askari wrote a scathing critique of M. D. Taseer during the late 1940s in his discussions of Pakistani culture. See Mohammad Hasan Askari, *Majmu'a* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> The literature is too large to detail here. The academic discussion on the partition of British India is ongoing and has produced a series of excellent texts; see Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 3-4 (esp. 3 n4 for a series of books on the period). Also see Vazira Yacobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) for an innovative read of the partition process. Partition literature (fiction and poetry) has also become a specific genre within South Asian literary trends. This literature is mostly in Urdu and Hindi and deals with the horrors of 1947. See Mumtaz Shirin, 'Fasadat aur Hamare Afsane' ('The Riots and Our Short Stories') in *Miyar* (Lahore: Naya Idara, 1963) for a detailed early discussion of this literature.

Also see Jason Francisco, 'In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly', *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol.11 (1996), pp.227-50, for a review of the subject.

David Gilmartin, 'Pakistan and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.57 (1998), pp.1068-95.

*Ibid.*, pp.1090-91.

Eventually this led to a civil war and the independence of Bangladesh in December 1971.

It is indeed a popular assertion that Urdu was the language of North Indian Muslims. The historical inaccuracy of this claim remains contested (even in the twentieth century Urdu was the first language for many Hindus and Sikhs, and indeed some of its most famous literary figures are non-Muslims). See Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1996), and Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922-1992*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Amin discusses the Chauri Chaura incident of February 1922, 3 for discussion of national amnesia.

See Ann Cvetkovich, 'Public Feelings', *South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol.106 (2007), p.461.

For a more comprehensive discussion on Manto, see, among others, Aamir Mufti, 'A Greater Story-writer than God: Genre, Gender, and Minority in Late Colonial India', in *Community, Gender and Violence*, Vol.11, *Subaltern Studies*, No.11, ed. Partha Chatterjee and Pradeep Jeganathan (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000), pp.1-36. Mufti's article is a brilliant analysis of Manto's work and shows Manto's ambivalent relationship to the question of nationalism and the place of Urdu and Muslimness within the larger story of the partition of South Asia in 1947.

See Geeta Patel, *Lyrical Movements, Historical Hauntings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). Patel presents an intellectual and life history of one of Manto's contemporaries, the poet Meeraji, who is one of the quintessential queer characters of the period. A poet and literary editor of some stature, Meeraji died young; like Manto, he drank himself to death in the late 1940s while in his late thirties.

José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

See Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the History of Philosophy', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp.253-64.

19 See Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), esp. chap. 1.

20 *Ibid.*, p.10.

21 Cvetkovich, 'Public Feelings', p.463.

22 I borrow here from Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, pp.3-4.

23 The dates of the congress were 28 February to 6 March 1948.

24 See 'Report on Pakistan', Review of the Second Congress, in *Documents of the Communist Party of India*, Vol.5 (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1997), pp.757-61.

25 It is indeed ironic that a secular and noncommunal party like the CPI was dividing itself along communal grounds and also asking specifically Muslim cadres to go to Pakistan. While among the senior Muslim cadres within the CPI, people like Syed Sibte Hasan followed the orders, Dr. Kunwar M. Ashraf, for example, a historian by training was in London during this period and did not come back to India until the mid-1950s. He opted for a self-imposed exile rather than becoming enmeshed in disagreements with the newly radicalized party. Dr. Z. A. Ahmad, another party member, actually faced the wrath of the CPI's left turn in politics and was forced to remain underground for a number of years. See Z. A. Ahmed, *Mere Jeewan Ki Kuch Yaden (Some Memories of My Life)* (Karachi: Idara Yadgar-e-Ghalib, 2004).

26 It goes to Zaheer's credit that he never used his extended family's influence and wealth for his personal gain. Even when his own family faced extreme financial burdens during his time in Pakistan and after his return to India in the mid-1950s, he seldom received (or asked for) assistance from his more well-off relatives. A glimpse of this relationship can be gauged from the memoirs of Zaheer's youngest daughter Noor. See Noor Zaheer, *Mere Hisse Ki Roshnai (My Portion of Ink)* (Karachi: Sanjh, 2006). Also see 'Chief Event in Past History of Communist Party of Pakistan', Public Record Office, London, DO 35/2591.

27 See Anwer M. Ali, *The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action* (Lahore: Punjab, Criminal Investigation Department, 1952).

28 See Carlo Coppola, 'The All India Progressive Writers' Association: The European Phase', in Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature, vol. 1, South Asia Series Occasional Papers, iss. 23, ed. Carlo Coppola (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1974), pp.1-34.

29 In 1947-48, the various CPP district organizing committees supervised the formation of the local APPWA chapters. Before coming to Pakistan Zaheer was in charge of the AIPWA and hence took a

deep interest in retaining the association as a party front. See Coppola, 'All India Progressive Writers' Association', pp.1-5.

See Hafeez Malik, 'The Marxist Literary Movement in Pakistan', *Journal of Asian Studies*, No.26 (1967), pp.649-64,

Anonymous, 'Manshoor' ('Manifesto'), *Sawera*, Nos. 7-8 (1950), pp.24-31.

*Ibid.* It will take a longer article to unpack the puritanical bent in progressive discourse of this era.

*Ibid.*, p.28

The harsh criticism of people who were until recently fellow travelers reflected the radical turn in the CPP's politics caused by the election in 1948 of B. T. Ranadive as the secretary general of the CPI. Ranadive's speech at the Second Party Congress in Calcutta, where he became secretary general, laid the foundation of this new radical line, calling for the Party to struggle for a new kind of state, based on an alliance of workers, peasants, and a progressive intelligentsia under proletarian leadership. The CPI in effect declared war on the then Indian government led by Nehru.

See 'Hamari Tehreek, Anjuman Taraqi Pasand Musanafeen Lahore Ke Hafta War Ijlas' ('Our Movement, the Weekly Meeting of the Progressive Writer's Association Lahore'), *Naqush*, Vol.5 (February 1949), pp.179-85. The names mentioned as participants in the discussion of Manto's text are Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Abdullah Malik, Arif Abdul Mateen, Zia Jalhandari, Ahmad Rahi, Tufail Ahmad Khan, Mohammad Safdar, Hafeez Qandhari, and Qamar Azad. Partition literature has since become a specific genre within South Asia. The literature is mostly Urdu and Hindi and deals with the horrors of the 1947 partition of British India. See Shirin, 'Fasadat aur Hamare' for a detailed discussion of this literature.

'Hamari Tehreek', p.179.

*Ibid.*

*Ibid.*, p.180. *Khol do (Open It)* by Manto is a masterpiece. It is a very short story on the traumas of the partition violence. It was first published in *Naqush* (the very journal that published the report of the meeting), edited by Qasmi. The journal was attacked by the censors for publishing the story. Qasmi later used the phrase about picking pockets in an open letter and condemned the story as perverted and antihuman. See Intizar Hussain, *Chiraghon Ka Doohan (The Smoke of Lamps)* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1999).

Including, especially, Zia Jalhandari and Hafeez Qandhari. Also notice Qasmi's reversal of his views after receiving intense criticism from others — a kind of social censorship.

- <sup>40</sup> Ali Sardar Jafri, *Taraqi Pasand Adab (Progressive Literature)* (Aligarh, India: Anjuman Taraqi-e-Urdu, 1957), pp.202-3.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.203.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.195.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, 'Kuch to Kahiye' ('Say Something'), *Nuqush*, No.9 (1949), pp.4-9. In the early 1930s the publishing of the collection *Angarey (Sparks)* by Zaheer and others started the literary journey that ended in the founding of the PWA. This particular volume was attacked for its anti-Islam representations and also for its perversity. The progressives had always been viewed with suspicion by the more conservative reading public and the British Indian government as propagating free thought and lax morality.
- <sup>44</sup> Jafri, *Taraqi Pasand*, No.198. N.M. Rashid (1910-75) was one of the most original Urdu poets of mid-twentieth century South Asia. Although criticized by the progressives for his writing style and his themes, he was personal friends with many of them and wrote the introduction to progressive poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz's first book of poetry. He was underappreciated as an intellect during his lifetime. After the creation of Pakistan he had a career with the United Nations in various countries. He died in 1975 in London, where he had retired. Recent academic work by Sean Pue will, it is to be hoped, reintroduce this creative genius to the wider reading public in the West.
- <sup>45</sup> Aziz Ahmed, 'Taraqi Pasand Adab' ('Progressive Literature'), quoted in Mumtaz Sheereen, *Manto Noori na Naari (Manto: Light nor Fire)* (Karachi: Scheherazade, 2004), pp.145-49.
- <sup>46</sup> Qasmi, 'Kuch to Kahiye', p.6.
- <sup>47</sup> The classic case was the uproar around publication of the book *Angarey* in 1932. As mentioned above, this was a collection of short stories by Zaheer, Ahmed Ali, Mahmooduzzafar, and Rashid Jehan, all of whom would later be among the founders of the Progressive Writers Association (Ahmed Ali later left the group). Publication of the book drew strong protest from the Muslim public and also from the government of India, which in 1933 ordered its forfeiture on the grounds that the book was indecent, morally corrupting, and sacrilegious.
- <sup>48</sup> I borrow this from Geeta Patel's excellent argument on the progressives and their relationship with the question of sexuality in *Lyrical Movements*, pp.83-171.

- 49 An accessible reading of perversion can be distilled from Claire Paaczowska, *Ideas in Psychoanalysis: Perversion* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2000).
- 50 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, pp.3-5.
- 51 'Rooster' could refer to a Muslim in this case.
- 52 Manto here uses the word *halal*, which is the Muslim form of religiously killing an animal.
- 53 Sa'adat Hasan Manto, 'Safai Pasandi', in *Manto Nama* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1991), pp.770-71. My readings of Manto's stories have been partially influenced by the recent writings of the India-based literary critic Shemeem Hanfi. Specially, see Shemeem Hanfi, 'Adab Me Insaan Dosti ka Tassawar' ('The Concept of Humanism in Literature'), *Dunyazad*, No.21 (2008), pp.13-30.
- 54 *Mistake* is said in English. The issue here is what becomes visible when the trouser falls down: a circumcised or uncircumcised man, which would make him either a Muslim or a Hindu, respectively. I am of course assuming that the killer and the murdered are both males; it was more likely that a female victim would be raped and then killed or left to die.
- 55 Manto was very aware of these attacks on him and was particularly upset at Qasmi's characterization of his stealing cigarette butts from corpses. He had considered Qasmi a friend and maintained in a piece of writing that his anger was not because Qasmi did not understand him, rather he was dismayed that Qasmi had followed the reigning fashion in literary circles where only 'redness' could be considered a trustworthy cause. See Manto, 'Jaib-e-Kafan', pp.223. In this piece he never names Qasmi, but rather uses the first letter of the Urdu alphabet, alif, with the sound *a* (for Ahmed, from Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi) to identify him.
- 56 For a discussion of Manto's own rendition of some of these cases, see Sa'adat Hasan Manto, 'Zehmat-i-Mehr-Darakhshan' ('Thought of the Rising Sun'), in Manto, *Manto Nama*, pp.351-403.
- 57 His drinking led to his premature death in 1955 when he was in his early forties, leaving behind a wife and young children.
- 58 Also see Patel, *Lyrical Movements*, for a similar exclusion of the poet Meeraji, who was Manto's contemporary.
- 59 Sa'adat Hasan Manto, 'Afsana Nigar aur Jinsi Masail' ('The Writer and Sexual Issues'), in Manto, *Manto Nama*, pp.484-87. The article was first published in *Savera*, a progressive literary magazine in the late 1940s (exact date unknown).
- 60 Manto, 'Afsana Nigar', No.56 (*Savera* version), No.61. Aamir Mufti, 'The Aura of Authenticity', *Social Text*, No.64 (2000), pp.87-103.

<sup>61</sup> Sanaullah Dar Meeraji (1912-1949). See endnote xviii.

<sup>62</sup> See Mehr Afshan Farooqi, 'Towards a Prose of Ideas: An Introduction to the Critical Thought of Muhammad Hasan Askari', *Annual of Urdu Studies*, No.19 (2004), pp.175-90.

<sup>63</sup> Specifically, see the following articles in Askari, *Majmu'a*: 'Pakistani Hakumat or Adeeb' ('The Intellectual and the Pakistani State') [October 1948], pp.1120-25; 'Taqseem-e-Hind ke Ba'ad' ('After the Division of India') [October 1948], pp.1126-37; and 'Pakistani Adeeb' ('Pakistani Intellectuals') [November 1948], pp.1138-46.

<sup>64</sup> Although a severe critic of the progressives and the communists, Askari would also condemn the state for censoring progressive literature or banning journals associated with the APPWA. As Intizar Hussain notes in his memoirs, Askari maintained it as his right to criticize the progressives but was not willing to give the government this right. See Hussain, *Chiraghon Ka Doohan*.

<sup>65</sup> Farooqi, *Towards a Prose*. Askari, *Majmu'a*, pp.1132-33.

<sup>66</sup> In this particular essay, Askari does not name any writers but develops a general theme based on his readings of English literary journals. See 'Maujudat Angrezi Adab' ('Contemporary English Literature'), in Askari, *Majmu'a*, pp.920-26 [March 1945].

<sup>67</sup> Mohammad Hasan Askari, 'Hashya Arai' ('Creating Margins'), in Manto, *Manto Numa* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1991), pp.745-51.

<sup>68</sup> This refers to Manto's short story, 'Safai Pasandi' ('Clean Habits'), in Manto, *Siyah Hashye*. I introduced this story earlier in the essay.

<sup>69</sup> Manto, 'Jaib-Kafan', p.223.

<sup>70</sup> There have been major uprisings in Balochistan for national self-determination of the region, from 1948, when the province was forcefully incorporated into Pakistan, to 1973, when a full-scale war was fought in the region with the Pakistani army on one side and armed rebels on the other. Even currently, a low-intensity war continues in many parts of Balochistan.

<sup>71</sup> The ongoing civil war in the northwest of Pakistan (areas bordering Afghanistan) can also be understood as one of Pashtun national rights, albeit the idiom of the struggle may be Islamic jihad instead of secular nationalism.

<sup>72</sup> See Shirin, *Fasadat*.

<sup>73</sup> Askari, 'Hashya Arai'.

<sup>74</sup> I am borrowing here from Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>75</sup> See Shemeem Hanfi, 'Adab Me Insaan Dosti', p.24.

<sup>76</sup> Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*.



- <sup>77</sup> For example, M. D. Taseer, Akhtar Husein Raipuri, Ahmad Ali, and Mumtaz Shireen, among others.
- <sup>78</sup> Askari was a personally a complicated man and had strong opinions about his fellow intellectuals. Intizar Hussain, the Urdu short story writer and novelist, speaks in his memoirs about how Askari would become fond of someone and praise the person no end and then within days would turn against the same person, either ignoring him totally in public or finding in him the most vulgar flaws of intellect and personality. It may be possible that the introduction to Manto's book under discussion here was written at a time when Askari and Manto found common cause in their opposition of the progressives. Hence, Askari's reading of Manto's stories may have something to do with his genuine appreciation of Manto's craft, but it may also have to do with his momentarily using Manto's text to attack the progressives. It shows the brilliance of the person, but also his deep anticommunist feelings. See Hussain, *Chiraghon Ka Dhoan*, pp.15-54 for memories of Askari in Lahore in the late 1940s.
- <sup>79</sup> Mohammad Hasan Askari, 'Mussalman Adeeb aur Mussalman Qom' ('Muslim Intellectuals and Muslim Nation'), in *Majmu'a* [1948], p.1113. Askari in his distinctive sarcastic mode here hints at Faiz Ahmed Faiz's famous poem, 'Subh-e Azadi' ('The Dawn of Independence'). In this poem Faiz talks about how this dawn was not the promised one and the destination is yet far. He received criticism from his progressive colleagues and others for this major poem.
- <sup>80</sup> There is not enough space to discuss how Zaheer moderated his views in later years.
- <sup>81</sup> See Askari, 'Mussalman Adeeb', pp.1111-19. 'Mussalman aur Tarraqi Pasandi' ('Muslims and Progressiveness'), in *Muqallat Muhammad Hasan Askari*, ed. Sheema Majid (Lahore: Ilm-o-Irfan, 2003), pp.58-63 (Askari's article was first published in the weekly *Chattan*, September 1951). In *Chattan*, Askari directly attacks Zaheer and quotes from his speech at a literary conference in which Zaheer openly advocates support for India's sending troops into Kashmir in 1948 to defend the democratic aspirations of the Kashmiri public against foreign aggression (meaning Pakistan) — a position that in later years haunted the communists as anti-Pakistan.
- <sup>82</sup> Jafri had initially moved to Pakistan and then moved back to India in 1948-49.
- <sup>83</sup> Jafri, *Taraqi Pasand*, pp.204-05.
- <sup>84</sup> The prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, openly advocated the supremacy of one ruling party and derided as traitors and enemy agents those who opposed the Muslim League. See Allen McGrath,

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*The Destruction of Pakistan's Democracy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.65-68.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Given these pressures and the government surveillance, as secretary general of the CPP Zaheer remained underground throughout his tenure until his arrest in sometime in February or March 1951 in connection with what is now called the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. At that time, the Pakistan Government brought charges of sedition and of plotting a military coup, naming certain leaders of its own military and members of the Central Committee of the CPP, Zaheer and Mohammad Ata. The poet and progressive intellectual Faiz Ahmed Faiz (Faiz was never a card-carrying member of the Communist Party) was also accused of being a co-conspirator and was jailed along with the others. There were widespread arrests and a blanket clampdown on the party's activities. The entire process crippled the movement and demoralized numerous cadres. The communist movement in Pakistan, nascent as it was, for years did not recover from this suppression.

<sup>87</sup> I am borrowing here again from Walter Benjamin's work. See Benjamin, 'Theses'. He would argue that no instructive stories could be told about the modern age, and he challenged the nineteenth-century triumphalism of progress. He argued that one could only speak in forms of fragments or remembrance images (montage) rather than in terms of future utopia. Also see Norbert Bolz and Willem Van Reijen, *Walter Benjamin*, trans. Laimdota Mazzarins (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995), pp.48-49.

<sup>88</sup> Anson Rabinbach, introduction in *In the Shadow*, pp.1-21.

<sup>89</sup> See Jacqueline Rose, 'Response', in Said, *Freud and the Non-Europeans*, 76. Her argument is made in the context of the newly formed state of Israel in 1948, a moment in history shared by Pakistan and Israel as ideological states based on religious nationalism.

<sup>90</sup> Here I follow the concept of the state of exception, which has recently been rearticulated by Giorgio Agamben (borrowed from the writings of Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin). It is akin to a legal civil war that eliminates not only political adversaries but also entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be incorporated into the political system. In this formulation, there can be two models: one is the state of siege in which the military suspends all civil law in time of war; the other is the suspension of individual liberties and constitutional guarantees by civilian decree. Both tendencies again and again come together in terms of Pakistani politics. Considering

the country's periodic military dictatorships (1958-69, 1977-88, 1999-2007), the idea that there can be a constitutional dictatorship in which the constitution is suspended in order for it to return is a farce that has often been played in Pakistan's brief history. I hope that the next time Pakistanis hear the argument 'no sacrifice is too great for our democracy, least of all the temporary sacrifice of our democracy', they pay particular attention, as this starts the state of exception with which the country's dictators and civilian heads of governments begin their careers. See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> See Benjamin, 'Theses'.

<sup>92</sup> See Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of 'Subaltern Studies'', *Economic and Political Weekly*, No.30 (1995), pp.751-59.

<sup>93</sup> Cvetkovich, *Public Feelings*. Also see Elizabeth Freeman (moderator), 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Round Table Discussion', *GLQ*, No.13 (2007), pp.177-95.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* Also see Elizabeth Freeman, 'Introduction', *GLQ*, No.13 (2007), pp.159-76.

<sup>95</sup> Manto, 'Afsana Nigar'.

<sup>96</sup> I am indebted to Judith Halberstam for this paragraph; see *In a Queer Time*, pp.3-4.

<sup>97</sup> Bolz and Van Reijen, *Walter Benjamin*, pp.48-9.

<sup>98</sup> Gilmartin, 'Pakistan and South Asian History'.

# The May 1998 Nuclear Explosions in South Asia and the Peace Movement in the Diaspora: The Role of Intellectuals

*Ishtiaq Ahmed*

## Purpose of the study

In the aftermath of the May 1998 nuclear explosions carried out by India and Pakistan, the electronic mail proved to be a unique facility that enabled diaspora intellectuals instantaneously to connect, link up and, on occasion, mediate the peace movement in the two countries. This paper seeks to delineate the role Indian and Pakistani intellectuals in the diaspora play in the contemporary South Asian peace movement. The main concern of the exercise below can be presented in the form of two questions:

1. How and why did diaspora intellectuals play a mediating role in the peace movement in the aftermath of the May 1998 nuclear explosions in South Asia?
2. What are the implications of global networks, in particular those mediated by diaspora nodes, for contemporary South Asian politics in general and in the promotion of civil society institutions dedicated to peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts in particular?

## Introduction

On 11 and 13 May 1998, India detonated altogether five nuclear devices. Pakistan followed suit by its own series of six test explosions on 28 and 30 May. A perverse euphoria was exuded by both governments, which induced people to start dancing in the streets and distribute sweets to celebrate the perceived greatness attained by them. Suddenly the self-fulfilling prophecy of the forces of fear, hate and aggression on both sides had been confirmed for the fifth time (bloody division in 1947, wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971 and the blasts of 1998) in just over fifty years: that those on the Other Side are inveterate enemies who pose a lethal threat to the survival and identity of those on This Side. At bottom of the hectic and escalating efforts of the two

## The May 1998 Nuclear Explosions in South Asia...

states to acquire the capacity to hit first and hit hard was the fundamental problem of security.

Now, the notion of security is a complex social construct, which conveys different meanings to different groups, societies and states. It is in turn a reflection of the problem of identity.<sup>1</sup> At one point in time, Catholics and Protestants fought bitter wars in Europe; this animosity has survived in a violent form in the current period only in Ireland. Concerning the Indian Subcontinent, relations between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have also fluctuated historically. The clerics and even lay intellectuals of the three groups (this is meant only in a loose sense, because each such group comprises sectarian and other variations) have been involved routinely in defining the distinct boundaries and identities of their collective membership. From the second half of the 19th century communal identities began increasingly to be politicised. In the 1920s rightwing Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs began to organise themselves along communal lines. In the process militaristic communal movements emerged, fed on a discourse laced with suspicion, fear and aggression.<sup>2)</sup>

There were also efforts in the opposite direction to forge more composite and pliable identities, but the partition of India in 1947 caused the death of around one to two million Hindus, Muslim and Sikhs and resulted in the forced transfer of some 14 to 18 million people. In the key province of Punjab which was divided and separated on the basis of religions, the transfer of population under duress was also accompanied by ethnic cleansing. It sowed deep suspicions and hatred between the successor states of India and Pakistan and unsurprisingly among their peoples too, especially the refugees. The controversial international boundary fixed by the Radcliffe Award of 17 August 1947 created bitterness on both sides but it was not until the mid 1950s that efforts to tighten control were put into effect.<sup>3</sup> However, the process of total segregation was consummated only after the 1965 and 1971 wars between the two states. Thereafter there was practically no communication or contact between the two peoples. Visa to visit the other side was virtually impossible for people who could not claim to have close relatives on that side. Thus notwithstanding geographical contiguity and a thousand years of living in the same region, sharing popular culture,

1947 -  
two  
million

languages and dialects, while simultaneously being aware of their distinctive group boundaries, the links between the Indian and Pakistanis peoples were ruptured and severed completely.

It is therefore not surprising that both sides maintain an egregious record of bad neighbourly conduct. Everyday, at dusk this animosity is elaborately and ostentatiously manifested during the flag-lowering ceremony at the Wagah-Attari Border, situated between Lahore on the Pakistani side and Amritsar on the Indian side (before Partition some people used daily to catch the early train from either of these cities, do their job or business in the other, and return. The distance is some 45 kilometres between them). The soldiers symbolically seal the border every night by ramming the iron-gates with a fierce bang to indicate that an impassable barrier exists between the two countries and their peoples. There are usually large crowds on both sides who watch this awe-striking spectacle of mutual rejection. They add zest to the ceremony by nervous clapping and other gesticulations.

On another level, however, contact could not be completely severed: that deriving from radio transmissions. In Pakistan the broadcast of Indian film songs continued to enjoy great popularity while in East Punjab the Punjabi programme of Lahore Radio was regularly followed (a habit perhaps developed since many years before partition when Lahore Radio catered for the whole of Punjab). This type of contact attained dramatic proportions with the arrival of television. In the 1970s the state-owned Indian Doordarshan television began to beam programmes across the border. Indian films had been a craze in Pakistan and a chance to see them again greatly excited Pakistanis living within the range of the transmissions. I remember that in the beginning some people in Lahore even neglected their businesses and offices. Some cases were reported of people declared their grandparents dead for a second time so as to stay away from college or office and watch an Indian film. In due course, Pakistan's superior TV plays found eager and loyal audiences in India.<sup>4</sup> From the 1990s onwards, commercial satellite television has greatly enhanced the reception of news and entertainment. Several Indian and, in recent years, Pakistani channels private channels are viewed by the eager public. A limited direct contact however began to be established once again as cricket and hockey matches and series began to be played

*cultural  
contacts  
special  
media*

frequently again in the 1980s. Consequently, although physical nearness and eye-to-eye contact remain negligible visual images have been whetting the curiosity on both sides.

However, it must be strongly emphasised that from the 1970s onwards the relations between the power elites and the establishments of the two states had been going from bad to worse; the nadir being touched with the nuclear explosions of May 1998.<sup>5</sup> Thus both sides have been aiding and abetting separatist movements on the other side. Tit-for-tat terrorist reprisals by agents in the service of the intelligence services have been finding easy targets in the market places, streets, buses and trains on the opposite side. The Kashmir dispute—a classic outcome of the vagaries and ambiguities of the colonial withdrawal—was again revived in the late 1980s in the Indian-administered parts of the former princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. Quite simply the Kashmiri Muslims demand an end to Indian misrule. The Indians alleged Pakistani involvement, while Pakistan repudiated all such accusations.<sup>6</sup> The 1990s have witnessed ultra-nationalist rhetoric and invective reach a feverish pitch as extremists tried to demonise and dehumanise the people across the border. Consequently hawks have been calling the shots in the security and defence establishments of the two states.<sup>7</sup> In India, the BJP came to power in 1998 on a programme resounding with big nation ambitions. Hindu extremists had been greatly emboldened after they succeeded in demolishing a mosque at Ayodhya in northern India in December 1992, which had allegedly been ordered by the founder of the Mughal Empire Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur to be built in 1528 on the exact site of a temple where god Rama is supposed to have been born.<sup>8</sup> In Pakistan the Nawaz Sharif government had actually come to power in 1997 on a mandate to negotiate peace with India and find an honourable solution to the Kashmir dispute. The voters gave massive support and Nawaz Sharif attained a clear two-thirds majority in parliament. It seems that the people in general did not pay heed to the otherwise highly-charged and delirious anti-India rhetoric of the right-wing extremist Islamists aptly described as Jihadis (Islamic conquerors) by some observers.<sup>9</sup>

It was in these circumstances that the nuclear test explosions were conducted by the two bellicose states. The

euphoria and jubilation in the cities of the two states, was a reflection of both hatred and fear, feelings that grip societies and collectivities when they excitedly react to the consequences of inflicting mutual annihilation upon the enemy and themselves.

## **Globalisation**

Current definitions of globalisation invariably describe it as a tendency to a worldwide reach, impact, or connectedness of social phenomena. The instantaneity and simultaneity of communication facilitated by the most recent invention – the Internet – of the ongoing revolution in communications has hitherto never been attained. It is seen as having practically rendered obsolete and redundant the notion of territoriality, supplanting it with deterritorialisation and instead ushering in the era of supraterritoriality.<sup>10</sup> The motive force underlying such change is the ever-expanding global market economy.

Apparudrai conceptualises the global economy as constituted by a number of disjuncture between economy, culture and politics. Such disjuncture result from the dialectical tension generated by simultaneous cultural homogenisation and heterogenisation.<sup>11</sup> He proposes a framework comprising five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscares, mediascares, technoscares, financescapes and ideoscapes. The idea of scape is that the shape of these various landscapes is irregular and fluid, and one gets a different view from different angles. Thus ethnoscares, ideoscares and so on are not objectively given relations, but:

*Perspectival  
landscapes*

Perspectival constructs inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multi-nationalis, diasporic communities as well as subnational groupings and movements (whether religious, political, or economic), and families. Indeed, the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part from their own sense of what these landscapes offer.<sup>12</sup>

The landscapes are the building blocks of imagined worlds, that is multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically



situated imaginations of individuals and groups spread around the globe. Furthermore, many individuals and groups live in such imagined worlds and can sometimes even subvert the official imagined worlds of states.<sup>13</sup>

*ethnoscapes*  
*ideoscapes*  
*ideoscape*

For the purpose of the present enquiry, ethnoscapes and ideoscapes are relevant. An ethnoscape is a landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live. Although stable communities and networks based on different types of solidarities continue to exist, human motion pervades all relationships. People fantasise moving short and long distances and many do that either as economic migrants or humanitarian and political refugees. The ethnic linkages are easily politicised with the result that the primordial connections become global. It is through the ideoscape – which refers to the chain of ideas usually deriving from the narrative of the Enlightenment such as freedom, rights, welfare, and sovereignty, and so on – that ethnic politics is articulated. In the past, these ideas were part of the internal system of Western societies, but are now globally dispersed and diaspora communities and individuals, particularly intellectuals, are their bearers in the present times<sup>14</sup>

*diaspora*

Below, I elaborate further some central concepts and develop a framework to analyse the role of diaspora intellectuals in the peace movement. Now, the term diaspora is classically associated with a community of people who have been forced to leave their original homeland under duress, but who yearn to return to it one day. In an ideal sense, a diaspora alienates or insulates itself from the place and culture where it is actually located and directs its emotional life to the memory of the lost homeland<sup>15</sup> A diasporic community seeks to maintain links between group members wherever they may be dispersed after the expulsion from the homeland by particularly emphasising allegiance to that homeland.

In the context of the post-war South Asian diasporas, important modifications need to be introduced. In the present structure of territorial states, the identity deriving from state-oriented nationality is a standard reference applied universally to categorise people. Thus once borders are crossed, the main description employed by the international system to define individuals is that of state-based nationality such as Indian,

Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Spanish and so on. If people do not abandon hearth and home under any direct threat to their lives, but more out of a concern to improve their standard of living or for miscellaneous economic gains, then the ethnoscape is even more varied than that of groups exiting under political threat.

The mainstream Indian (upper caste Hindus) and Pakistani (mainly Punjabi and Urdu-speaking refugees) diasporas in the West consists chiefly of economic migrants of various types. After the Second World War, travel restrictions from South to North were relaxed initially by the former European colonial powers, but later also by Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. As a consequence Indian and Pakistanis have been settling in Western societies in substantial numbers, among them professionals, skilled and unskilled workers constituting the main categories. Since assimilationist tendencies in the cultural milieu of Western societies are undeniably strong, an oversensitive relationship with the state of origin and its dominant religious culture tends to develop among the mainstream.<sup>16</sup> Moreover remission of money back home to help family members or buy real estate or agricultural land and businesses reinforce emotional linkage with economic interests of the mainstream diasporas.

At the same time, such individuals are involved in processes, which ultimately strengthen their links to the new surroundings. Most importantly it is setting up home, businesses and careers that create a stake in the new surroundings. The establishment of community centres and places of cultural congregation and worship such as masjids, mandirs and gurdwaras symbolise and signify that home has been transplanted in the new surroundings.<sup>17</sup> Many prefer to acquire dual citizenship. The more politically inclined individuals start playing the role of lobbyists for their respective states in the new society, thus linking the two places into a global arena of action and power games. Such milieus also turn out to be breeding grounds puritanical religious mobilisation and organisation.

Consequently, at present several printed and Internet newspapers, discussion websites and so on are available in North America and the UK which project the interests of their mother states and religious communities are publicised and defended.<sup>18</sup> Some South Asians have even made their way up in politics, such

*repatriated*

as several Indian and Pakistani lords sitting in the British parliament. In contrast, peripheral diasporic subgroups may not identify with the mainstream. Among them political activism may be in the other direction: that of seeking support for some secessionist project. Thus Tamil, Sikh, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Baloch and others who have been fighting for their separate states against Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan take advantage of the freedom and security available in the West to promote ideas and demands considered seditious by the mainstream.<sup>19</sup>

In this regard, the formation of hybrid structures and networks integrating the Indian and Pakistan diasporas, both mainstream and peripheral, need also to be brought into the analysis. The fact that mainstream Indian and Pakistani diasporas come in direct contact with each other through the workplace and common residential areas is an experience quite distinct from that of compatriots at home. A certain degree of affinity begins to evolve in the face of common problems of adjusting to the receiving society and its language and culture. Perceptions of discrimination and threats of racism emanating in the Western societies help arouse a South Asian/Asian/Black ethno-identity and consequently another track around which imagined worlds start taking shape. Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Sindhi and other identities bring together Sikhs Hindu and Muslims.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally a high culture based on shared poetic and artistic heritage deriving from works in the two main languages of the subcontinent Urdu and Hindi, written in different scripts but easily understood in the spoken form by all sections of the upper northern part of the subcontinent, is revitalised as writers, poets and playwrights socialise in the West. Such high culture is augmented by the shared heritage of classical music. A wider belt of concerts given by pop artists and film stars in turn surrounds the classical music constituency. Consequently websites, radio stations and other regular means of communication exist in which individuals from both communities are engaged.<sup>21</sup> Apart from such intersections, those relations centred on the immediate neighbourhoods where children play in the same parks and playing grounds and go to the same schools are the most stable. In any case, the politics of South Asia, either between the various states or

within them, inevitably have an immediate impact on the diasporic communities, and the responses are varied and diverse.

1998 nuclear explosions  
Thus, when the nuclear blasts took place in India and Pakistan in 1998, the nationalist lobbies came into action immediately in support of the official stances of their states. The well-established and affluent Hindu revivalist movements in the diaspora such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, RSS and BJP prematurely celebrated the blasts. A few days later the Pakistani explosions were a cause of jubilation for the Pakistani mainstream. Many felt that an Islamic bomb was necessary to frustrate Indian designs to finish off Pakistan. For some it was an achievement, which put the Islamic civilisation at a par with the other rival civilisations. The nationalist diasporas at that time acted as bastions of patriotism and funds began to be collected both by Indian and Pakistani lobbies to help their mother-states in the face of sanctions imposed by the United States, Japan and many other countries.<sup>22</sup>

counter narrative  
In these circumstances, a counter-narrative also emerged in India and Pakistan put forth by traditional intellectuals – writers, scientists, and teachers and so on.<sup>23</sup> Antonio Gramsci assigns a pivotal role to traditional intellectuals in a democracy. Traditional intellectuals are relatively autonomous of the ruling class because of their positions protected under the law. They therefore act as mediators between the political and civil instances by taking up issues of democratic rights and the rule of law. Although he was theorising in the context of a modern Italian nation-state, he observed that traditional intellectuals can also be diffusers of cosmopolitan ideas.<sup>24</sup>

Imp Antonio Gramsci

vs intellectuals  
The democratic-minded Indian and Pakistani have been taking up critical positions in relation to the ruling class. Moreover, globalisation has meant that they have been integrated into worldwide human rights and peace movements. Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had already been established; some funded by Western and Japanese donors. These and other civil society actors have been disseminators and mediators of cosmopolitan values, or the Enlightenment ideas as Appadurai calls them. Cosmopolitanism has throughout history been a counterpoint movement to established structures of power in all societies, and in the modern period has represented the urge for

peace, friendship and understanding across cultures, borders and other boundaries. In India, the intellectuals enjoy much greater freedom of action and expression, since the civil state is bound by various constitutional and legal restraints. In Pakistan civil society institutions are poorly developed because of long periods of dictatorship and military rule.<sup>25</sup>

In this regard, the role of diaspora intellectuals assumes special significance. The ethnoscaples and ideoscapes along which the imagined worlds of South Asian diaphora intellectuals are formed furnish channels and avenues for communication, identification and mobilisation which are both global and local but also in motion and intersecting at various levels and nodes. By virtue of their location in an intellectually stimulating, free and relatively safe milieu in the West, they enjoy fairly wide latitude of freedom to express themselves as well as link up with one another. Simultaneously, their sense of emotional and cultural alienation deriving from, on the one hand, their immediate cultural surroundings and, on the other, from the state-oriented nationalists lobbies of their co-ethnic expatriates who live around them, place them in situations which make them identify intellectually and morally more closely with the struggle for democracy, justice and peace in the abandoned homeland. The ethnic connection with South Asia, especially with the mainstream, connects them and confers access to them to audiences in the forsaken homeland.

Consequently when the nuclear blasts took place and jingoistic ideas were at a feverish height in both the countries, their counterparts in the diaspora ably assisted the cosmopolitans in their actions. Being physically beyond the immediate reach of the state, they could more freely exploit the Internet, comprising the electronic mail and websites, to propagate the democratic agenda of peace, understanding and cooperation. The new technological was ensconced in the main cities of India and Pakistan. Email networks and websites already connected the various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) of the two countries to the ongoing discussions and debates all over the world on all sorts of problems and issues. For civil society actors, such change has widened the scope for international support and co-operation.

Not surprisingly, such change threatens the traditional bases of state power and sovereignty. And this brings us back to the question of sovereignty and territoriality. Although the days of the old type of totalitarian system sustained by – among other things, strict control and censure of international post and telephone contacts, may be over – the state can nevertheless curtail many civil liberties and freedoms in the name of national security. Since states enjoy the prerogative of sovereignty, they can get away with more or less with impunity and repression of political opposition can be extensive. In Pakistan where a civil state has not stabilised, even after more than half a century has lapsed after independence, the situation is endemic.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore premature to assume that the territorial state has become obsolete and antiquated.

On the other hand, the will of the state does not extend beyond its borders, and this fact provides scope for the critics in the diaspora to defy the government more successfully. At critical junctures, such as war or the threat of war, when surveillance and harassment of the counterpoint peace movement increases sharply mainstream diaspora intellectuals can play a significant role in facilitating communication between the peace activists on the opposite side of the borders and with international actors.

### **Towards a South Asian global peace network**

A South Asian peace movement with global ramifications had begun to take shape when under the auspices of the United Nations; civil society constituted by, among other entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was promoted from the 1980s onwards as a necessary prerequisite of a worldwide democratisation project. Pakistani and Indian professionals had been meeting at international forums and person-to-person contacts began to be made. It was realised that both countries faced egregious problems of violence against women, sprawling poverty, environmental degradation and so on. Out of these experiences, new awareness and ties began to emerge. Kalpana Sharma and Ayesha Khan sum up that experience:

During informal conversations after the day's work was over, Indian and Pakistani participants often voiced their sadness that they did not have more access to each other's countries, and that the intransigent politics of

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the region prevented them from working together to solve many shared problems. Friendships were made, ideas for change were discussed and stereotypes were shattered.<sup>27</sup>

In 1991 the United States Information Service brought together retired officials and policy-makers from Pakistan and India for talks at Neemrana. Consequently contacts between civil society actors of the two countries became more frequent and regular and were in the process connected to an emerging global civil society movement. It led to the encouragement of more official contacts on confidence building measures. From 1992 onwards even the two governments were brought into the ambit of direct discussions by various United Nations initiatives, under the track 2 diplomacy. Talks began to be held between representatives of the two governments twice a year on matters of common interest.<sup>28</sup>

*Pak-India  
Peace Forum  
Track 3*

In 1994 the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy came into being. This forum became the chief vehicle of the so-called 'track 3 diplomacy', that is, a forum for interaction, between Indian and Pakistani civil society organisations. To all the social and environmental items requiring cooperation between the two states was also added the Kashmir dispute, which for various reasons lies at the heart of the ideological and nationalist confrontation between the two countries. Both governments allowed groups of some 150-200 activists, intellectuals and concerned citizens from both sides to travel to the other side and discuss and debate issues hindering the normalisation of relations between the two.<sup>29</sup> The annual meetings of the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy, held in the major cities of the two countries on an alternate basis proved to be a venue where diasporic intellectuals began to come and meet. These developments led to networking among activists on the ground and those in the diaspora. Thus in May 1998 when the nuclear explosions were carried out by India and Pakistan email contacts that had hitherto been sporadic were transformed into channels of immediate consultation, discussions and flow of information.

### **Reaction to the first Indian blast**

Immediately after the first nuclear test explosion conducted by India on 11 and 13 May Indian peace activists began to organise demonstrations and peace marches in India. Achin Vanaik wrote an article 'Danger of an Arms Race' condemning the BJP's jingoism. He dismissed the Indian claim that the tests were carried out to brace Indian defences against China.<sup>30</sup> A statement by a number of Indian scientists was equally contemptuous of the nuclear explosions. They pointed out that India had abandoned its earlier policy not to move towards weaponisation although the capability to explode a nuclear device had been acquired in 1974. They expressed the fear that an arms race will follow in South Asia.<sup>31</sup> In a letter to the Indian Express of 17 May, a number of leading Indian personages such as Lalita Ramdas (wife of retired Admiral Ramdas), Lt. General Gurbir Mansingh and others came out forcefully against the tests.<sup>32</sup>

As regards Pakistan, already on the 11<sup>th</sup> A.H. Nayyar, a leading Pakistani physicist at the Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad was contacted from Hiroshima by a Japanese journalist Akira Tashiro to elicit his reaction. It was followed by a call from Princeton by Zia Mian, a Pakistan-born lecturer of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Both recalled that in a joint article published in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (July-August 1996), they had predicted that if the BJP came into power it would conduct nuclear tests and that Pakistan would definitely respond with its own tests.<sup>33</sup> In Islamabad there was an immediate flurry of activity. On the 14<sup>th</sup> the peace activists led a procession to the Indian High Commission and handed over a note of protest. The late Eqbal Ahmad, a veteran anti-war intellectual and scholar, wrote some articles in leading Pakistani newspapers condemning the Indian action. In between the Indian and Pakistani tests, Nayyar published an article 'The Hard Choice' in the Pakistani English-language newspaper, *The News*, in which he urged the Pakistani government to desist from conducting its own tests.<sup>34</sup>

In a letter written on 14 May, that is one day after the first Indian blast, to the New York Times a number of concerned persons, mostly Indian academics working in American universities condemned the BJP government's decision to test a nuclear device. In it was said:



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We strongly condemn the explosion of these devices and the BJP's policy of nuclear hawkishness. There is enough indication that the BJP has resorted to this to whip up ultranationalist sentiments within the country... India must renounce the nuclear option to restart a moral campaign to denuclearize the world. This is the only sane solution, but one not viable if the BJP remains in power.<sup>35</sup>

### Reaction to the first Pakistani blast

On 29 May, one day after the first Pakistani test, Zia Mian denounced the decision of the two governments to follow the baneful policy of tit-for-tat.<sup>36</sup> In another paper called, *South Asia's Nuclear Folly*, Hassan N. Gardezi, based in Canada remarked:

The nuclear tests of India and Pakistan in the month of May 1998, have cast a grim and lasting shadow of mass destruction over the entire subcontinent. They have triggered the ultimate phase of a deadly weaponized nuclear arms race between the two countries. If this is the culminating glory of 50 years of independence as it seems to have appeared from the rhetoric of the political leaders of the two nations and displays of boisterous euphoria by large sections of their populations, it only testifies to how far away they have collectively strayed from reason and fundamental human values.<sup>37</sup>

Tracing the growth of confrontational politics between the two countries, Gardezi took to task the nationalistic attitudes of the power elite in the two countries. He also upbraided the US government for initiating the arms race in the subcontinent by enticing Pakistani into regional military pacts and arming it with better weapons. In return India reneged on the commitment to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir and began its own expansion of military capability. Another angle added to his argument was that:

The hasty commercialization of nuclear energy in the industrialized countries for profit motives has also been an important contributory factor in leading to the greater nuclear peril in South Asia. The type of atomic reactors sold to India and Pakistan by Canada and

France were the main source of fissile materials needed for starting the nuclear cycle towards the manufacture of nuclear explosives.<sup>38</sup>

He also rejected the right of the five permanent members of the Security Council to possess nuclear weapons.

In a joint article A.H. Nayyar and Zia Mian depicted a scenario of total destruction in case of an Indian nuclear attack upon the Rawalpindi-Islamabad region.<sup>39</sup> In another paper, another leading Pakistani physicist Pervez Hoodbhoy (at Princeton at that time) and Zia Mian made the following observations:

Should there be a breakdown of governance, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, as well as the current chief of the army, a moderate, may be replaced by hard-liners from Islamist groups. Within the army, fire-breathers such as retired General Hamid Gul, the former head of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence Agency, stand to gain. These groups are the ones who rejoiced most loudly at Pakistan's tests. They are pathologically anti-Indian, and determined to settle scores once and for all with India. What this means in the nuclear age is terrifying.

When Muslim-hating Indian BJP hard-liners incited and enticed Pakistan into testing (the first time a state has tried to compel an adversary to test nuclear weapons!), they may have hoped for a repeat of Cold War history. The BJP would like to see Pakistan exhausted and broken by an arms race and, quite possibly, might get their wish. But unlike the steel cage of the Soviet state, which ensured that some crucial structures of governance survived even as everything else collapsed, Pakistan's state is already fractured by multiple violent ethnic and religious conflicts. Disintegration into molecular civil war with fiefdoms and warlords is a terrible possibility. Should this occur, India will have created a South Asian nuclear Somalia for a neighbour.<sup>40</sup>

In Islamabad, an NGO, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) arranged a meeting on 2 June at a hotel in which A.H. Nayyar and Eqbal Ahmad were the main speakers. That same

day the Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy arranged a press conference. The press conference was disrupted by angry anti-India protesters, mainly goons of the rightwing Jamat-e-Islami and the Shahab-e-Milli outfits, which included journalists sent ostensibly to cover it. Chairs were hurled and physical violence was employed against the speakers and organisers. The goons shouted 'Anybody who is a friend of India is a traitor'.<sup>41</sup>

In early June an organisation called Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament (MIND) was formed. Among its founders were Prabir Purkasyastha, Pratful Bidwai and Kamla Mitra Chenoy. A Convention against Nuclear Weapons was held in New Delhi on 9 June. It brought together a broad spectrum of intellectuals, public figures and politicians.<sup>42</sup>

### **The peace process and diaspora intellectuals**

H. Kapoor  
If any individual is to be credited for setting up lasting connections and networks on a global level between South Asian peace activists, it must be Harsh Kapoor. Born in 1962, Kapoor, a sociologist, had been living in Europe since 1985. He had initially helped organise meetings of Indian and Pakistani labour activists engaged in examining the work practices of multinationals in the two countries. The destruction of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya impelled him to set up a database, 'Resources against Communalism and Fundamentalism in India'. He was also involved in the embryonic process that led to the foundation of the Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy in 1994. Reacting to the fact that rightwing Indians and Pakistanis were making full use of the internet website while none of the peace activists had such a facility, he decided to set up the South Asia Citizens Web as an avenue for interaction between South Asian NGOs and other civil society actors. The website began to function in 1996. By 1999 it had received some 34,643 visitors.

Upon getting the news of the Indian explosions, Kapoor rushed back to France from New York, where he was visiting some friends, and on 13 May he established another website, South Asians Against Nukes. It was through emails that he started contacting like-minded persons and organisations in South Asia as well as in abroad. Between November 1998 and February 1999 the email list had extended to 21000 regular contacts. The BBC,

several universities and the various United Nations agencies have been using the South Asians Against Nukes website as a standard source of information and reference. Up until June 2000 some 619000 visitors had consulted the *South Asian Against Nukes* webpages.<sup>43</sup> Kapoor, based in a small French village comprising only 30 individuals, has been the central node in the global email traffic between Indian, Pakistani and international peace activists. On 15 May 1998, Kapoor sent the following email to a host of Indians and Pakistanis.

Dear Friends,

Recent Nuclear tests by India are going to push India Pakistan ties to a dangerous abyss and lead the region into a senseless arms race.

We have to raise our voices of protest.

If any of the anti-nuclear/peace groups in South Asia (or within the diaspora in Europe and the US) are organising demonstrations, or issuing common statements we could coordinate with them to hold the protests and support their efforts. At any rate, we would strengthen each other's hands through these protests.

[Wherever possible lets join and collaborate with peace movements groups from anywhere in the world, which are raising their voice. As others have mentioned, these tests and the rhetoric that has gone with them, reflect the growth of fascism in India, personified by the BJP and its allies. It must be challenged at all costs.

Best,

Harsh Kapoor<sup>44</sup>

Accompanying this message was a famous poem of the Urdu poet Sahir Ludhianvi (1921-80). Harsh provided an English translation, too.

**Ai Shareef Insano**

*Khoon apna ho ya paraaya ho*

*Nasl-e-aadam ka khoon hai aakhir*

*Jang maghrib mein ho ke mashriq mein*

*Amn-e-aalam ka khoon hai aakhir*

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*Bam gharon par giren ke sarhad par  
Rooh-e-taameer zakhm khaati hai  
Khet apne jalein ke auron ke  
Zeest faaqon mein tilmilaati hai*

*Tank aage baden ke peeche haten  
Kokh dharti ki baanjh hoti hai  
Fat-ha ka jashn ho ke haar ka sog  
Zindagi mayyaton pe roti hai*

*Is liye ai shareef insaano,  
Jang talti rahe to behtar hai  
Aap aur hum, sabhi ke aangan mein  
Shama jalti rahe to behtar hai*

### **Dear Civilised People**

Be this blood ours or theirs  
Humanity is bloodied  
Be this war in East or west  
A peaceful earth is bloodied

Whether the bombs fall on homes or borders  
The spirit of construction is wounded  
Whether it is our fields that burn or theirs  
Life is wracked by starvation

It matters not that tanks advance or retreat  
The womb of the earth becomes barren  
Be it a celebration of victory or loss' lament  
The living must mourn the corpses

That is why, o civilised people  
It is better that war remains postponed  
In your homes, and in ours  
It is better that lamps continue to flicker<sup>45</sup>

### **Establishment of South Asian against Nukes**

On 20 May, Kapoor announced that he has set up a website devoted exclusively to the nuclear question. He also sent another

poem 'Parchhai'yan' (Shadows) of Sahir Ludhianvi written to protest the earlier American nuclear tests. After the blasts in South Asia, it gained direct relevance in South Asia. (S. M. Shahed has done the translation on the present author's request)

**Parchhai'yan**

*Hamaara piyar hawadis ki taa'b laa na sakaa  
Magar inhen to muradon ki raat mil jaye  
Hamen to kasmakash-e-marg-e-be amaan hi mili  
Inhen to jhoomti gaati hayaat mil jaye*

*Bahut dinon se haye yeh mashghala siyaset ka  
Ke jab jawan hon bachche to qatl ho jayen  
Bahut dinon se haye yeh Qabt hukmranon ko  
Ke door door ki kheti men qahat bo jayen*

*Bahut dinon se jawani ke khwab veeran hayen  
Bahut dinon se muhabbat panah dhoondhti haye  
Bahut dinon se sitam deeda shahrahon par  
Nigar-e-zeest ki asmat panah dhoondhti haye*

*Chalo ke aaj sabhi payemal roohon se  
Kahen ke apne har ek zakhm to zaban kar lein  
Hamara raaz, hamaraa nahin, sabhi ka haye  
Chalo ke saare zamane ko raazdaan kar lein*

*Chalo ke chal kay siyasee muqaamiron say kahain  
Ke hum ko jang-o-jadal kay chalan say nafrat hai  
Jisay lahoon kay siva koe rang raas na aa'ay  
Hamain hayaat kay us pairahan say nafrat hai*

*Kaho ke ab koi qaatil agar idhar aaya  
To har qadam pay zameen tang hotee ja'ay gee  
Har aik mauj-e-hava rukh badal badal kay jhaptay gee  
Har aik shakh rag-e-sang hotee ja'ay gee  
Utho ke aaj har ek jangjoo say yeh kehdaain  
Ke ham ko kaam ki khatir gulon ki haajit hai  
Hamain kisee ki zameen cheenaay ka shauq nahin  
Hamain to apni zameen par halon ki haajit hai*

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*Kaho kay ab koi taajir idhar ka rukh na karay  
Ab is jaga koi kunwaari na baichee ja'ay gee  
Yeh khait jaag pade, uth khadi huin faslain  
Ab is jaga koi kiyaree na baichee ja'ay gee*

*Yeh sarzameen hai Gautam ki aur Naanak ki  
Is arz-e-pak pay wehshee na chal sakain gay kabhee  
Hamaara khoon amaanat hai nasl-e-nau kay liyay  
Hamaray khoon pay lashkar na pal sakain gay kabhee*

*Kaho ke aaj bhi hum sab agar khamosh rahay  
To is damaktay hu'ay khakdan ki khair nahin  
Junoon ki dhalee hu'ee atomee bala'on say  
Zameen ki khair nahin, aasman ki khair nahin*

*Guzishta jang mein ghar hi jalay magar is baar  
Ajab nahin ke yeh tanha'iyen bhi jal ja'ain  
Guzishta jang mein paikar jalay magar is baar  
Ajab nahin ki yeh parcha'iyen bhi jal ja'ain  
Tasawwurat ki parcha'iyen ubharti hain<sup>46</sup>*

### **Shadows**

Our love could not survive the burden of mishaps  
But at least let the new generation achieve their dreams  
We were mired constantly in the struggle to survive  
At least let them realize their beautiful dreams

For too long now it has been the pastime of politicians  
That when children achieve youth, they be sacrificed  
For too long now it has been an obsession with rulers  
That they sow seeds of famine in fields far and wide

For too long now the dreams of youth have been barren  
For too long love has been seeking protection  
For too long on these highways, full of torture  
Life itself has been seeking honour and refuge

Come, let us speak with all downtrodden souls

*Challenges of History Writing in South Asia*

And ask them to place a tongue in every wound  
Our sorrow is not just our own, let us share  
Come let us make the whole world our confidante

Come and let us tell these gamblers in politics  
That we hate the ways of war and strife  
The clothing that likes nothing better than the colour of  
blood  
We hate this garb of war on our youth

Declare that if any warrior comes this way  
At every step Earth itself will restrain him  
Every wisp of wind will turn fiercely against him  
Every field and bough will rise to stop him

Rise and let us say to every warmonger  
That we need our young for our work and well-being  
We have no desire to wrest anyone else's land  
We are satisfied with our own land for our livelihood

Declare that no trader should turn this way  
No daughter of ours will be sold here any more  
These lands have woken up, the harvest is ready  
No fields of ours are for sale any more

This land is the land of Gautam and Nanak  
This sacred land will not support any cruelty  
Our blood is guarantee to the new generation  
Our blood will not sustain hordes any more

Speak out, for if we even today stay quiet  
Then this gleaming bowl of dust is not safe  
With these atomic menace cast in feelings of rage  
This earth is not safe; the sky is not safe any more

In the last war, only houses were destroyed, but this time  
It is no surprise that even our solitude will be burnt up  
In the last war, bodies were burnt, but this time  
It is no surprise that even our memories will be burnt up



Shadows of imagination rise to the surface  
(translated by S.M. Shahed)<sup>47</sup>

The invocation of two of the most famous poems of one of the greatest romantic and humanist poets of modern times, Sahir Ludhianvi, was indeed a classic manifestation of the deep cultural links flowing from the landscape of high culture along which the ethnoscape and ideoscape world imaginations of the cosmopolitans could readily and easily meet. The mention of two indigenous paragons of peace and justice Gautam (Buddha) and Nanak (the founder of Sikhism), in the context of peace and amity was a vivid reflection of the fact that the particular and universal were not mutually exclusive; rather they were complementary. Anyone with an exposure to the humanist and radical traditions of modern South Asia and conversant or familiar with Urdu and Hindi high culture could immediately identify with the images, fears, values and hopes expressed in these cosmopolitan verses. It indeed touched deeply even those persons who did not understand fully chaste Urdu but could easily get the message. Lalita Ramdas (wife of retired Admiral Ramdas of the Indian Navy), a peace and women rights activist expressed her feelings in the following words, 'Thanks Harsh for passing on this text – even with my poor Urdu, it is moving and so appropriate'.<sup>48</sup> In any case, an immediate chain of email communications between Indians and Pakistanis began to be formed on a global scale. Regular consultations started to take place. Since then Kapoor has from his residence in France been regularly, almost daily, sending email despatches containing the latest news on matters of peace, communal relations, sundry government policies and much more, concerning mainly South Asia. The two websites provide almost all the important statements made on the subjects of peace, communal and inter-state relations, struggle of the oppressed classes, castes and minorities, women, militarisation and nuclearisation made by governments, NGOs and other international actors.

### **Demonstrations**

The cosmopolitan intellectuals in the diaspora received the news of the nuclear blasts with utter dismay and many demonstrations and protest rallies were arranged. For example, on 13 June, exactly one

month after the first Indian nuclear blast a peace demonstration was held in Montreal. About 100 people took part in it. It was arranged by the South Asian Women's Community Centre (SAWCC) and CERAS (Centre d'études et recherches sur l'Asie du sud). CERAS is a nongovernmental organization which works with grassroots organizations in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal in the areas of development, gender, health, peace and secularism. A third of the group was of Pakistani origin, another third were of Indian origin and the rest were individuals concerned with peace. The speakers Naushad Siddiqui, Humeira Iqtidar and Dolores Chew denounced the tests. They also said that the nuclear club of five, including the United States, had no right to criticize India and Pakistan, while they maintained a nuclear arsenal and carried out tests themselves.<sup>49</sup> It was pointed out that:

A gathering such as that in Montreal was now a privilege unobtainable in India and Pakistan, as meetings, talks and protests by eminent scientists, intellectuals and activists against the nuclear tests were attacked.<sup>50</sup>

On 15 June, *Samar* (South Asian Magazine for Action and Reflection), the War Resisters League, and Peace Action International held joint demonstrations in New York. While condemning the Indian and Pakistani tests they criticized the imposition of sanctions. The statement issued on that occasion made the following observation:

We are also appalled by the hypocritical posturing of the nuclear nations, when these nations have blocked every international move towards a nuclear-free world by their insistence on retaining their own nuclear arsenals. Lasting peace is possible only when the nuclear powers agree to disarm. Otherwise, the Indian and Pakistani governments' actions will be matched in time by other aspirants to the membership of the nuclear nations club. We categorically oppose the U.S. decision to impose sanctions on India and Pakistan, which will crush the most vulnerable sections of these societies, the sections most likely to have opposed the decision to go nuclear. As the citizenry of the world today, we demand a just process, in good faith, towards

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global disarmament which applies equally to all nations.<sup>51</sup>

On 19 June an advertisement appeared in the newspaper 'India Abroad' and 'India West', as part of a public campaign by South Asians abroad to mobilise opinion against nukes. Before that several communications had taken place between Pakistani and Indian activists. Among them, the messages between Ijaz Syed (Pakistani) and Bannerji (Indian) were transmitted by Kapoor in the daily despatches. These included a discussion of a draft statement on the nuclear tests and that donations of \$10 from each supporter be collected with a view to publishing the statement in diaspora newspapers.<sup>52</sup> The following points were made in the statement:

India and Pakistan have fought three wars and have remained hostile to each other since 1947. The intolerance exhibited by the present governments has severed the lines of communication that had recently opened up between the two countries. The implications of the BJP government's radical departure from India's traditional foreign policy for peace in South Asia (a policy that has been based on Panchsheel and compassion) and the ensuing threat of a nuclear arms race in the region are something that should trouble all peace-loving people of the world. Other than the danger of possible radioactive fallouts from such tests, we are deeply concerned that the poor citizens of India and Pakistan will have to bear the brunt of the massive expenses to build nuclear weapons, because such expenses that India and Pakistan can hardly afford are now going to be heaped by these governments on poor people, thereby putting their already difficult lives in serious jeopardy.

We want global peace and disarmament, and not escalation of wars. We strongly deplore the nuclear weapons and missiles programs in India and Pakistan. The peace-loving people of South Asia must not be provoked by these irresponsible acts. The two countries should enter into negotiations to eliminate

the immediate danger of a nuclear conflict, and then to de-escalate gradually in mutually verifiable steps.<sup>53</sup>

Although the various NGOs in South Asia were already in contact with each other both within their respective countries and across the borders, in those early weeks and months Harsh Kapoor's email facility proved vital for dissemination of news, which was being suppressed. For example, Lalita Ramdas wrote to Kapoor requesting him to circulate a statement condemning the nuclear blasts which the Indian newspapers had refused to publish. She also made this interesting remark on a meeting held in Ottawa:

'One of the speakers from New York, a physicist called Dr. Vinod Mubayi, said that the RSS has now killed Gandhi twice; his body in 1948, and his legacy 50 years later. But I doubt if Gandhi will stay dead long; like Jesus he has a happy day of rising from the dead and walking among us.<sup>54</sup>

### **The network of peace organisations**

A different type of structure developed through the efforts of Pritam K. Rohila (born in 1935 in the united Punjab), a neuropsychologist based in the United States. In the wake of the destruction of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya, he started the Association of Communal Harmony in Asia (ACHA). The process was completed in 1993. ACHA is a non-profit, voluntary NGO dedicated to communal harmony in Asia. He explained his reasons for founding ACHA in the following words:

Many of us had lived through traumatic happenings of 1947. Also, we had been concerned about matters such as the state of Hindu-Sikh relations in Punjab, Hindu-Muslim relations in Bangladesh and India, Ahmediya & Christian bashing as well as Shia-Sunni problems in Pakistan, treatment of low caste individuals and ethnic rebellions in Northeastern India, ethnic warfare in Sri Lanka, and finally India-Pakistan animosities. Bari Masjid destruction became the proverbial final straw on the camel's back. Our purpose was to provide a forum to the silent majority of South Asians who we believed

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had wanted peace & harmony among them. Also we wanted to show the well-organized, well-financed and outspoken bigots and hate-mongers among us that they did not represent us.<sup>55</sup>

Throwing further light on ACHA, Rohila explained that the organisation arranged meetings of communal harmony and India-Pakistan friendship days, and lectures on peace and conflict resolution are also offered. But these efforts were not very successful because they remained confined to the local areas in which ACHA activists were based. For a few years a newsletter about peace and harmony and the work of organisations dedicated to such matters was also published, but the production costs and other considerations kept the circulation low. When the nuclear blasts in 1998 took place in South Asia, ACHA did not have access to a website. A letter expressing concern was sent to the presidents of India and Pakistan on 14 June 1998. It was as follows:

Dear Sirs,

We, undersigned, originally from India and Pakistan are very concerned about the nuclear devices being tested by India and Pakistan, and the escalating arms race between them. It is tragic that already meager resources, which should have been used for the betterment of the citizens, are being wasted on weapons of mass destruction.

We, therefore, appeal to you and through you to the government officials and people of both countries to stop any further tests immediately and to do your utmost to reduce tensions and hostilities between the two neighbors.<sup>56</sup>

Coordinating activities with other anti-nuclear organisations and networks in South Asia and in the diaspora has been a priority of ACHA. In 1999, an email bulletin 'ACHA Bulletin' (currently called 'ACHA Peace Bulletin'), began to be published. Suddenly the ability and capacity to reach out globally increased dramatically. ACHA has a board of directors constituted by volunteers. Rohila is the spokesperson and moderator of ACHA activities.<sup>57</sup>

At present about 2,000 individuals and organisations around the world receive the electronic Peace Bulletin. In the year 2000, to facilitate communication between South Asia related peace, harmony, secularism and human rights organisation. Various North American peace organisations network with ACHA. A directory with such information has been put together. It is accessible to everyone from the website. Also, in 2000 an appeal was sent to peace and harmony activists and organisations to join together for a sustained and comprehensive effort. It culminated into the Peace in South Asia Campaign, which is endorsed by about 30 individuals and organisations. Pritam K. Rohila and the present author are its co-chairmen. The Peace in South Asia network will try to campaign in a concerted manner for the promotion of peace and harmony in South Asia. The idea of a Memorial at Wagah, dedicated to the victims of the Partition of India in 1947, which Pakistanis for Peace and Alternative Development (PPAD) announced on 4 January 2000, has been adopted as one of the main campaign issues for 2001.<sup>58</sup>

### **The establishment of a Pakistani network in the diaspora**

Up until the nuclear blasts of May 1998, a proper global network of Pakistanis dedicated to peace in South Asia did not exist. On 25 June I (the present author) requested Kapoor to circulate via email a petition against the test explosions, inviting originally only Pakistanis abroad to sign it.<sup>59</sup> Kapoor's help in the initial period was vital, but gradually a network began to form on its own. It is interesting to note that many messages of support started coming from Pakistan. Consequently a decision quickly to open it to all Pakistanis was taken. Soon discussions began to take place on many issues related to peace, human rights and democracy. Some people suggested that Indians and others should also be included among the supporters. The position taken after much deliberation was that the petition should be restricted only to Pakistanis. The argument was that maintaining a distinct Pakistani response in the midst of a wide range of other petitions in circulation was necessary. Among those who took active part in such discussions were Pervez Hoodhboy, Ameena Saiyid, Shahbano Aliani, Maqbool Aliani, Saghir A. Shaikh, Ghazala Anwar, Ayesha Vawda, Saleem

H. Ali (USA), Azad Kausari, Khawar Mumtaz, Nadeem Omar Tarar, Mohammad Tanveer, Iqbal Haider Butt, Zubair Faisal Abbasi, Faisal Ahmed Gilani, Amanullah and Faisal Kheiri (Pakistan), Naimullah, Ayub Malik, Ahmed Shibli, Babar Mumtaz, Yunas Samad and Fatima Husain (UK), Sohail Inayatullah (Australia), Mustafa Hussain (Denmark), Waseem Hussain (Switzerland) and Faheem Hussain (Italy). After much deliberation, I decided to keep the petition a Pakistani initiative entirely. Activists at Shirkat Gah and The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) were the largest among the supporters of the petition. The London-based Pakistani architect Ayub Malik worked in close association with the present author in spreading the message among Pakistani the world over. The Pakistani sociologist at Bradford University Yunas Samad emphasised that the dangers of a surprise attack should be highlighted in the petition.<sup>60</sup> Hassan Gardezi, Ahmed Shibli and Mahir Ali suggested some changes and improvements in the text.

Of course not everybody in the diaspora liked the idea of blaming both Pakistan and India for escalating the nuclear arms race. Some Pakistanis complained that India had provoked Pakistan and therefore the latter had no choice but to respond.<sup>61</sup> In principle, however, there was agreement that peace in the subcontinent had been jeopardised by the nuclear test explosions. The five-six weeks during which the campaign continued many more joined in. The result was a worldwide network of persons who among themselves shared a principled belief in peace, tolerance, justice, democracy within Pakistan and amicable and friendly relations between Pakistan and India.

On 11 August a petition entitled 'Pakistanis across the World Condemn Nuclear Tests and Weapons', signed by 205 Pakistanis, spread in all corners of the world, was sent to the Pakistani and Indian prime ministers and to newspapers in the two countries.<sup>62</sup> It condemned the nuclear test explosions and urged the need to resolve all disputes through dialogue. Besides several other points it was observed '... the assumption that a full-scale war is now impossible may perversely encourage local commanders to accelerate their war games'.<sup>63</sup> It was argued that the chances of an accidental war involving nuclear weapons increased enormously because there was no exchange of

information between the two countries and their technological capability to monitor each other's activities was extremely poor.

We do not, therefore, find the present policies of the governments of Pakistan and India on defence and security, especially the acquisition of nuclear weapon capabilities, justifiable on any grounds. We also find that the present arrangement that the USA, Russia, France, Britain and China can continue to possess nuclear weapons, arbitrary and flawed. We urge, therefore, the two governments to work towards a global regime dedicated to bringing about the total destruction of all nuclear weapons within a specified period of time, without linking it to their own right to nuclearize. As an immediate step, both countries should declare that they would not embark upon a programme of building nuclear weapon systems.<sup>64</sup>

Neither government responded and there was no coverage in the media. Notwithstanding such a discouraging response a global network of Pakistanis began to take shape. A discussion began between Ayub Malik, Faisal Ahmed Gilani, Hassan Gardezi, Ahmed Shibli and Bilal Hashmi and the present author to work towards the establishment of a permanent and regular network of like-minded Pakistanis. On 2 October 1998 such a network was formally announced:

The name of the network would be Pakistanis for Peace and Alternative Development (PPAD). A committee of volunteers will manage its activities, and Ishtiaq Ahmed shall be the coordinator.

### **Aims and objectives**

1. To formulate enlightened positions on issues of human rights, tolerance, social justice, and balanced economic and human development.
2. To uphold the equality of all human beings irrespective of their class, caste, creed, ethnic affiliation or gender.
3. To achieve the abolition of all forms of exploitation of one person by another.
4. To combat religious and sectarian intolerance and violence.



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5. To achieve the ideal of universal literacy, and abolition of child labour, bonded labour and economic exploitation of women and depressed and marginalized groups.
6. To take an unequivocal stand against militarisation in general and nuclearisation in particular.
7. To promote peace between Pakistan and India, and encourage the two countries to solve their differences and disputes through discussion and mutual accommodation.
8. To concentrate efforts on promoting alternative strategies of development and change based on principles of social justice, participatory democracy and environmental protection.
9. To further such civil society, which can resist pressure both of tyrannical government and transnational companies which exploit the resources of Pakistan.
10. To participate in international initiatives related to peace and alternative development.<sup>65</sup>

The PPAD has been involved in a number of initiatives concerning human rights violations, curtailment of civil liberties, issues of peace and justice in South Asia and in other parts of the world. Each initiative has been the result of discussion within the PPAD Committee or some supporter and sympathiser in Pakistan or in the diaspora has drawn attention to such an issue. The following are some of the statements issued by it:

1. On 14 January 1999 a letter was sent to President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair protesting the renewed bombing of Iraq. Both leaders were advised to comply with the Charter of the United Nations, which had outlawed the use of force to settle disputes. It was supported by 85 people.<sup>66</sup>
2. On 17 May 1999 a letter of protest was sent to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to protest the arrest of a number of Pakistani journalists, particularly Najam Sethi. Sethi had been accused of making remarks in a meeting in Delhi which were considered unpatriotic by the government. He was manhandled and taken into custody.<sup>67</sup>
3. On 4 January 2000 a statement was issued by PPAD demanding the construction of a Memorial at the Wagah-Attari Border between Pakistan and India and on the India-Bangladesh border to remember the victims of the violent and bloody partition of India in 1947. It was observed:

It is our sincere wish and hope that these Memorials will help begin a new chapter in the history of the Subcontinent – one based on a better understanding of the past and on mutual trust and respect in the future.<sup>68</sup>

The invitation was extended to all peace loving people of the world. In one sense, it was a break with the established tradition of keeping PPAD activities confined only to Pakistanis. It was, however a sign of PPAD expanding its interest in the larger question of peace between India and Pakistan and their peoples. The result was a gradual extension of the PPAD email list. Pakistanis, Indians and people from other parts of the world were brought into a common fold. Many new contacts were established and PPAD gradually became a discussion medium via email. The list of supporters exceeds 300 individuals and organisations and includes intellectuals, academics and others from the subcontinent and the rest of the world. The list has been used for constant exchange of views and messages all over the world.

4. On 8 May 2000 Ayub Malik sent a copy to the present author of a letter written by the Pakistani scientist and social debator A.H. Nayyar, about a vilification campaign being carried out against him by the Urdu-language Pakistani newspapers Nawa-i-Waqt (Lahore) and Ausaf (Islamabad).<sup>69</sup> The two newspapers had accused him of unpatriotic and un-Islamic conduct, since he has critiqued official interpretations of history and expressed a need to normalise relations with India. PPAD expressed its concern and demanded a forthwith cessation of such harassment and witch hunting.<sup>70</sup>
5. A report of a conference, Development and Science in the New Millennium, held in Karachi between 24-27 April 2000 disseminated on 18 September 2000. Ahmed Shibli, a committee member of PPAD, was its main organiser. Another committee member, Bilal Hashmi also participated in it. The conference, which brought researchers and scholars from all the continents of the world was devoted to questions of alternative development, and had a strong representation from the Third World.<sup>71</sup>
6. A PPAD Committee member and activist against separate electorates, Group Captain Cecil Chaudry drew attention

towards the continued discrimination against non-Muslims practised in Pakistan at the time of elections. On 27 September 2000, a letter was sent to the Chief Executive of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, requesting him to use his office to abolish the system of separate electorates. No answer was received to our letter.<sup>72</sup>

7. On 18 October 18, 2000, PPAD wrote a letter to Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, calling for international intervention and protection of the Palestinian people. It was stated:

We are writing to urge you, as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to intervene to re-establish the United Nations presence at the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to restore a framework of international legal principles to the search for solutions for an end to the Middle East crisis.<sup>73</sup>

8. PPAD received the disturbing information on 19 October that Dr Younas Shaikh had been arrested in Islamabad on charges of blasphemy. He had apparently said that the parents of the Prophet Muhammad were not Muslims. A person found guilty of blasphemy can be sentenced to death. In a letter sent on 23 October to General Musharraf, PPAD demanded that the blasphemy law should be rescinded and Dr. Shaikh should be given a fair trial.<sup>74</sup>
9. A long discussion through exchanges of email took place after Hassan N. Gardezi's (founder member of the PPAD committee) article 'Islamists and Hindutva Politics in India' was circulated on the PPAD list on 27 December 2000. Gardezi had found the extreme religious right in both Pakistan and India sharing the same type of values and objectives. It had provoked an angry response from retired Brigadier Usman Khalid of the Pakistan Army. In response, the present author (coordinator of PPAD) wrote back a counter response.<sup>75</sup> A long series of email exchanges took place between Usman Khalid and the present author. Ideas on which opinion was expressed on these such as the so-called clash of civilisations in which the former described the Hindu and Islamic civilisations as mutually exclusive while the latter argued that all civilisations had good

and bad sides and the art was to combine the good points of all civilisations into a universal civilisation. Later Iftikhar Malik (historian based in the UK), Ahmed Shibli (a founder member of PPAD), Sukla Sen, Vineeta Gupta, Anindita Dasgupta (based in India), Jawaid Quddus, Siva Digavalli, S.M. Shahed, Fawzia Afzal-Khan (based in USA), Brian Cloughley and Yunas Samad (based in the UK), and others took place.<sup>76</sup>

The PPAD has been participating in several peace initiatives in South Asia. Linkages between the peace lobbies in Pakistan and India are now firmly established and the diaspora medium set up by Harsh Kapoor continues to play the important role of transmitting information globally and between the two countries.

## **Conclusion**

The nuclear explosions of May 1998 shocked many peace-loving people of the world. South Asian cosmopolitans and peace-oriented activists responded immediately by various protest meetings and demonstrations. In the diaspora too, reaction was instantaneous. One thing common to all the various protests was the emphasis on opposing not only the nuclear competition which had started in South Asia, but also the possession of such weapons and devices by other states and powers in the world. Although contacts between Indian and Pakistani peace activists and various civil society organisations had been established the new situation created the need for a more systematic flow of news on both sides. An actor who could communicate effectively and efficiently with both sides could best play such a role. Such an historical role at that juncture was played by Harsh Kapoor. He converted the Internet, both email despatches and the website *South Asians Against Nukes* into a virtual information centre and node, where news concerning peace, democracy and communal harmony in South Asia was gathered and quickly disseminated in almost daily despatches to various networks. Working alone and from a remote French village, he has been performing the task primarily of an information source. On the other hand, ACHA has from the very beginning concentrated on building a network of personal contacts in North America. Besides monthly Peace Bulletins ACHA actively networks with organisations and arranges discussions and various other activities related to promotion of communal harmony. As

regards PPAD, its role has been more as a network engaged in intellectual debate and political opinion-formation activities. The fact that restrictions in Pakistan on free debate are much greater PPAD has been able to pursue its mission statement with greater freedom from abroad, although some Committee members reside in Pakistan. Although concentrating more on Pakistan, it has increasingly been involved in regular discussions with Indian intellectuals and peace and human rights activists. Also, the cultural links with the wider Islamic world have made it pursue the questions of justice and peace in the Middle East and Arab world, too. Thus, whereas Harsh Kapoor and ACHA have an essentially South Asian perspective, PPAD also occasionally participates in issues affecting West Asia or the Middle East, as it is more commonly known. In all three cases, the ethnoscaples and ideoscaples along which the imagined worlds are created and activities directed contain a mixture of cultural and ideational factors of both South Asian and global origins. However, mainstream diaspora intellectuals, with their cosmopolitan cultivation, are more prone to promote a democratic agenda within the existing framework of existing boundaries of their states of origin than perhaps intellectuals belonging to oppressed minority who may prefer a redrawing of territorial boundaries.

It seems that the period of old type of insulation which states could impose on their peoples is more or less over, and in future transterritorial linkages are likely to play a more important role than has been possible hitherto. The fact that diaspora intellectuals can operate from outside and are thus beyond the reach of the two states means that they can withstand harassment and threat more successfully than if it were within the physical reach of the nationalist thugs on both sides. The Internet can be considered a medium through which an old ambition to act and think like a world citizen may begin to be realised. With the new facility the internationalist can transcend the fact of borders and border controls, facilitate instantaneous communications and thus defy the strictures and constraints imposed by nationalist pride, fear and perverted ideas about security. Thus the most dramatic contraption of globalisation, the electronic mail, is perhaps the most unsettling invention for those who in the past have thrived in

maintaining mutually hostile and exclusive identities based on the maintenance of sealed borders.

Yet it should not be forgotten that the same facility is also available to the jingoistic and ultra-nationalist lobbies. The nationalist Indian and Pakistani networks continue to confront each other with harsh rhetoric and invective and therefore the struggle for peace and communal harmony will have to be won on the ground. Diaspora intellectuals can at most facilitate, by keeping the channels of communications open and acting as nodes from which messages and exchange of views can travel easily and swiftly, the struggle for democracy and peace. In the ultimate balance of power, such influence is marginal since the ruling elites and the establishments make the real decisions. However, assuming that the ultra-nationalists continue to pursue a constant path of conflict, it is the peace movement and especially the diaspora elements that stand to benefit the most from the freedom to communicate with one another across the globe and in the two countries. On the whole the Internet is a gain for this latter group.

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## Notes

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- <sup>4</sup> D. Bernstroof, 'Civil Societies in India and Pakistan' in *In Review*, Fall 2000, p.6.
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- <sup>16</sup> R. Ballard, 'The Emergence of Desh Pardesh' in Roger Ballard *et.al.* (eds.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain* (New Delhi: D.K. Publishers 1996), pp.1-34; See also, K.I. Leonard, *The South Asian Americans* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1997).
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Y. Samad, 'Media and Muslim Identity: Intersection of Generation and Gender, in *Innovation*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1998, pp.3-5.
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- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.22-3.
- <sup>21</sup> Y. Samad, *op.cit.*, pp.3-5. See also, K.I. Leonard, *The South Asian Americans*, *op.cit.*, pp.131-43.
- <sup>22</sup> Y. Samad, 'Nuclear Pakistan: The Emergence of a Peace Movement', *op.cit.*, p.10.
- <sup>23</sup> See the section 'Introduction' by the Indian novelist Arundhati Roy in particular but also many other chapters in Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, *New Nukes: India, Pakistan and Global Disarmament* (New York: Interlink Books, 2000).
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39 *Ibid.*, 29 June 1998.

40 *Ibid.*, 10 July 1998.

41 *Ibid.*, 3 June 1998.

42 *Ibid.*, 11 June, 1998.

43 The whole account is based on Kapoor's response by an email of 24 January 2001 to a number of questions sent to him by the present author. It was followed by a telephone interview and conversation on 25 January.

44 Harsh Kapoor, email dispatch, 15 May 1998.

45 *Ibid.*

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- 61 Akhtar Lodhi's email to Ishtiaq Ahmed of 27 July 1998.
- 62 I. Ahmed, email dispatch of 11 August 1998.
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- 65 *Ibid.*, 2 October 1998.
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- 68 *Ibid.*, 4 January 2000.
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- 70 I. Ahmed, email of 12 May 2000.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 18 September 2000.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 27 September 2000.
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## Introduction to Contributors

### **Gyanendra Pandey**

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his essays, 'Was there Feudalism in Indian History?' published in *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (1981) led to an international debate and resulted in a special double issue of the JPS. Later it was also published as a book, titled *Feudalism and Non-European Societies* in 1985. He is Founder-Editor of *The Medieval History Journal*, published by SAGE.

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